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*Betty's
Last Bet*

*by
Edith Ellis*

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T. S. Denison & Company, Publishers

623 S. Wabash Ave.

CHICAGO

BETTY'S LAST BET

BETTY'S LAST BET

A Farce-Comedy in Three Acts

537
1543

BY

EDITH ELLIS

AUTHOR OF

*"Mary Jane's Pa," "Contrary Mary," "The Man
"Higher Up," "Mrs. Jimmy Thompson,"
"Whose Little Bride Are
You?" etc.*



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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no 1

BETTY'S LAST BET

FOR FIVE MEN AND SIX WOMEN.

CHARACTERS.

- MRS. DARLING
A Widow with Four Great Problems.
- KATHERINE
Called "Kitty," Her Eldest Daughter.
- MARGARET
Called "Peggy," Her Second.
- DOROTHY
Called "Dolly," Her Third.
- ELIZABETH
Called "Betty," Her Fourth.
- HANNAH
A General Servant Who Doesn't Like Men.
- RICHARD WENTWORTH
Wealthy Man of Affairs and Colonel of National Guard.
- PERCY WENTWORTH
His Nephew and Ward; a Student, and Heir to a Large Portion of the Wentworth Fortune.
- JACK VAN LOON
Of the Historic Van Loons.
- HAMILTON MORIARITY
A Rising Young State Legislator.
- EDGAR DARLING
A Cousin Who Is a Student of Archaeology.

SCENE—*Living room in the Darling house in a remote small town in Connecticut.*

TIME—*The present. It is a bright summer day.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*Two and one-half hours.*

COSTUMES.

MRS. DARLING—Act I, light summer house dress, becoming; hair done high; earrings. Large white apron. Acts II and III, gray or dark silk or crepe afternoon dress; lace in sleeves and neck. Handsome comb.

KITTY—Acts I and II, pretty light cotton summer dress, black stockings and slippers. Act III, pretty dinner dress of light or bright material, shoes and stockings in keeping.

PEGGY and DOLLY—Same directions. The girls' dresses should be planned for contrast.

BETTY—Act I, first dress, handsome spring cloth dress and long cape, smart hat and gloves. Second dress, pretty cotton summer dress made in more youthful style and shorter; black shoes and stockings. Act II, same as last dress in Act I. Act III, very charming dinner frock, slippers and stockings to match.

HANNAH—Neat plain cotton dress and apron.

RICHARD WENTWORTH—Uniform of Colonel of National Guard. Small moustache if advisable. Swagger stick.

PERCY WENTWORTH—White flannel suit or white trousers; silk shirt and dark sack coat, belt and bright socks and tie; white shoes and straw hat.

JACK VAN LOON—Gray sack coat and trousers; silk negligee shirt, brown shoes and socks, motor cap.

HAMILTON MORIARITY—Blue or black sack suit, light felt soft hat; fancy tie and socks; gloves and motor coat.

EDGAR DARLING—Panama hat, brown or oxford suit; cotton negligee shirt, black tie, shoes and socks.

LIGHTS.

Footlights and borders full up, for it is daylight throughout the play.

PROPERTIES.

ACT I.

Wall telephone and bell.

Large rug.

Several small rugs if necessary to cover floor.

Two window shades.

Two pair sash curtains at windows.

Two pair cretonne, chintz or denim lambrequins.

Small desk with papers and writing material.

Four large pictures on wall.

Book shelves and books.

Large reading table.

Two easy chairs.

Three small chairs.

Lamp on table.

Small desk lamp.

Sewing table and chair.

Sofa with cretonne cover.

Three cushions.

Victrola and records.

Flower boxes for porch rail.

House plants on window sills.

Summer hat, flowers and ribbon for Peggy.

Work box and sewing material for Peggy.

Magazine for Dolly.

Plate of fudge for Dolly.

Tray of jars, painted inside to resemble canned fruit, for Mrs. Darling.

Same for Hannah.

Three letters for Mrs. Darling.
 Hand satchel, hand bag and umbrella for Betty.
 Small book of poems for Kitty.
 Motor horn.
 Swagger stick for Richard.

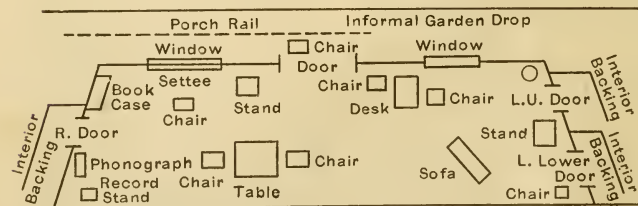
ACT II.

Silver and plates for sounds of characters lunching
 off stage at opening.
 Napkin for Betty.
 Glass of water for Peggy.
 Locket and chain for Peggy.
 Suit case and satchel for Edgar.
 Tray with pitcher of lemonade, six glasses and plate
 of cake for Hannah.
 Glass crash off L.
 Photograph album for Percy.

ACT III.

Small tray, two wine bottles and eight wine glasses
 for Mrs. Darling.

SCENE PLOT.



STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of stage; *C.*, center, *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *U. L.*, up left, etc. *Up stage*, away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

BETTY'S LAST BET

THE FIRST ACT.

SCENE: *A pleasant living room in the Darling home. Forenoon of the present day. The back wall of the room is broken by a door, C., leading on to a porch. On either side of the door is a window draped with cretonne and fresh net hangings. Beyond the door is seen a porch rail, and back of that a few feet is a drop showing a country landscape. The R. wall is broken by a door in the center leading into a drawing room or parlor. The L. wall has a door up stage leading to the dining room and kitchen. A lower door, L., leads to a pantry. Handsome rug on the floor; good pictures on the walls. Wall telephone R. of C. D. The furniture may be worn, but it is all good mahogany of fine design. Large reading table R. C. with chairs as shown in diagram. A desk up near window, L.; a settee, L. C. Easy chairs, stands, etc., as in diagram. A talking machine is down R., with record stand. Flowers are in vases about the room. A bookshelf or two against the walls. The room shows that it is the home of women of taste, though it is a bit shabby. The sofa and one or two of the chairs have cretonne slips to match the curtains at windows. House plants are on the window sills and flower boxes decorate the porch rail.*

Rise of curtain reveals KITTY sitting at her desk in the window, L., and writing. She is a charming

girl of twenty-three, very spirited but dignified. PEGGY is trimming a summer hat near the table, R. She is pretty, also, but not so tall as KITTY and of different type and coloring. Age twenty-one. DOLLY lies stretched out on the sofa, her head toward the window on a pile of cushions, reading a magazine and munching fudge from a plate on the floor near her. She is also pretty but inclined to be plump, rather slower witted than her sisters, and young even for her age, which is nineteen. All three are dressed in pretty summer cottons suitable for morning wear, and all wear aprons.

DOLLY.

(*In a droning voice.*)

"Gladys turned her eyes upon his with a look so full of pleading that as he gazed into their azure depths, something within his breast fluttered, swelled to bursting, and then like a tide retreated, leaving him helpless before her loveliness. 'Gladys, my own,' he said—"(Reaching for a piece of fudge.)

PEGGY.

(*Trying the effect of a bunch of flowers on the hat.*)

What do you think of this, Kitty?

KITTY.

(*Without looking up.*)

It's all right.

PEGGY.

(*Annoyed.*)

"All right"? What do you mean by all right? (KITTY continues writing in silence.) Why, you haven't even looked.

KITTY.

(*Looking up.*)

That's pretty. A little more to this side, though.

PEGGY.

I'm so sick of trimming my own hats. This poor old straw shape has been on duty so long it should draw an old age pension.

DOLLY.

(*Resuming, reading aloud, with her mouth half full of fudge.*)

"'Gladys, my own,' he said, 'bear with me. I am not the man you thought me. I am not worthy of your love. But, oh, my sweet angel—'"

KITTY.

Dolly, will you *please* shut up.

DOLLY.

"'—you have opened new vistas of life for me. You have—'"

KITTY.

And don't read with your mouth full; it's frightful.

DOLLY.

Peggy wants to hear this, don't you, Peg?

PEGGY.

I haven't heard a word you've been reading.

DOLLY.

It's adorable. I'll begin at the beginning. Listen. "The sun was sinking behind the old red barn, and—"

PEGGY.

(*Crossly.*)

Don't give us anything about barns, or chicken coops. We've got enough of that sort of thing right here.

DOLLY.

But you should hear how she meets him. It's the most romantic thing. "She was on her knees by the

spring with her lily hands trailing in the cool water, when the shadow of his broad shoulders—”

KITTY.

Will you girls keep still? How anyone can write a line of poetry with your gabbing in one's ears, I'd like to know. (*Resumes her position of thinking and finally gets a line.*)

(DOLLY is eating the last piece of fudge. PEGGY is tacking on the flowers.)

PEGGY.

(Casting an eye on DOLLY's fudge plate, and in a low tone.)

Mother will give you the dickens for eating all that fudge.

DOLLY.

She doesn't know I made it. I hid it under my bed last night.

(Voices of MRS. DARLING and HANNAH are heard off U. L.)

MRS. DARLING.

(In a strong and vigorous voice, heard off.)

We'll put them on the shelves now.

MRS. DARLING enters with a tray full of canned fruit in her hands, followed by HANNAH with another. The cans should be ordinary mason jars painted on the inside with dark red, purple or brown paint to look like fruit juice. MRS. DARLING is plump, handsome and forty-five, wearing a becoming house dress and hair done well.

HANNAH.

(As she follows her in.)

I always think they'd better be stood on their heads in the kitchen another twenty-four hours.

(HANNAH is tall, thin and rather gloomy; she wears a clean kitchen dress and is thirty-eight.)

MRS. DARLING.

Don't be so stubborn, Hannah. These cans have stood on their heads all night, and I've filled them up with juice.

HANNAH.

Well, it won't do no harm to give them another twenty-four.

MRS. DARLING.

Please don't argue. I guess I've put up fruit before.

HANNAH.

Yes, and those plums busted their tops off.

MRS. DARLING.

Dolly, get up and hold this tray for me.

DOLLY.

Oh, mother!

MRS. DARLING.

Reading a magazine again—and eating! What are you eating now?

DOLLY.

Nothing much.

MRS. DARLING.

Do you want to weigh a ton? It's fudge. I can smell it. Of all the fattening things it's fudge. Get up now and hold this tray. (DOLLY does so reluctantly.) You lazy girl! How do you expect to get a husband if you weigh a ton before you're twenty? (Begins to put away jars on shelves in pantry down L.)

HANNAH.

Oh, there's them that likes 'em fat.

PEGGY.

(Sarcastically.)

Yes: the Turks.

HANNAH.

All the Turks ain't Mohammedans, Miss Dolly. There's plenty of Christian Turks right up there in New York.

KITTY.

(Rising and throwing down her pencil.)

Oh, I give up! You might as well try to write poetry in a foundry.

MRS. DARLING.

(Returning for more jars.)

Poetry! What next? There's the garden to be weeded, and the chickens to be fed, and—

KITTY.

(In a burst of temper.)

Oh, I'm sick of it all. We'll be doing these same things until we're a hundred. I'd like to run away.
(Goes to the door and out on the porch.)

MRS. DARLING.

(Amazed.)

Well, I never! Katherine, is that the way to talk? And before your sisters! A nice example you're setting.

HANNAH.

(With a solemn wink.)

She's got something preying on her mind. Love, most likely.

PEGGY.

(With a laugh.)

Love? Yes, that is likely. Who is there to fall in love with in this place, I'd like to know?

DOLLY.

That's what I say. We're doomed.

HANNAH.

What do you bother about it for? You're ten

times better off single.' Look at me. Do I worry about gittin' married? Not much.

MRS. DARLING.

(As she goes busily on putting away the jars.)

You can't tell me, Hannah, that you're an old maid because you *want* to be. It isn't human.

HANNAH.

I wouldn't trade my liberty for the best man that ever smelled of tobacco.

PEGGY.

Well, I don't mind saying that if there was a decent looking youth in this village, or a marriageable man, I'd take some interest in this darned old hat. But as it is—ugh! *(With an impatient movement she sails the hat across the room.)*

MRS. DARLING.

(Taking the last jars off HANNAH's tray.)

That will do, Hannah. You may as well start making those pies.

HANNAH.

Yes, ma'am. *(Starts up.)*

MRS. DARLING.

We are going to have company for dinner.

KITTY.

Company?

MRS. DARLING.

A young gentleman.

PEGGY.

No!

MRS. DARLING.

Yes; I had a letter this morning saying we could expect him some time today.

Who is it?

DOLLY.

MRS. DARLING.

Your cousin, Edgar Darling, from Ohio.

KITTY.

What's the good of a cousin?

DOLLY.

Why, it isn't against the law to marry a cousin.

MRS. DARLING.

That's right, Dolly. And beside, his mother, your father's sister, writes that he is a very remarkable young man.

KITTY.

How?

MRS. DARLING.

He is an archæologist.

PEGGY.

That's all I want to know about him.

HANNAH.

Does an archæologist eat pie?

MRS. DARLING.

I should hope so.

HANNAH.

All right. But I'm only a plain cook, and I don't count on pleasing people that have a lot of 'ologies and 'isms in their systems. (*She exits U. L.*)

KITTY.

What is he coming to see us for?

MRS. DARLING.

He is on his way to Europe with a party of archæologists who are going to dig up Greece. (*Finishing putting jars away. Takes letters from pocket, one opened, one unopened.*)

PEGGY.

What is he like?

MRS. DARLING.

(*Sitting on the settee. The girls hover around her.*)

Your Aunt Katherine says—you are named for

her, Kitty—she says that Edgar is a model son, and devoted to his work; has never tasted liquor; never uses tobacco in any form. His English is so pure that she has never heard him use a word of slang. And as for staying out nights, he has never even been to the movies. (*Refers to the letter, re-reading it.*)

KITTY.

Why doesn't Aunt Katherine preserve him in alcohol?

PEGGY.

Yes; there'll never be two like him.

DOLLY.

Of course any man that comes to see us *would* be like that.

KITTY.

How long is this precious pet going to stay?

MRS. DARLING.

His mother says he will run down from New York; that he will only have a day and a half to spend with us before his expedition sails.

KITTY.

I shall stay up in my room and finish my poem.

PEGGY.

I shall make an excuse and go for a lonesome picnic in the woods.

DOLLY.

I shall go to bed and say I've got a headache.

MRS. DARLING.

You will do nothing of the sort. Teddy may not be the most lively young man in the world, but he's steady and reliable, and you might do worse.

KITTY.

I resign in Peggy's favor.

PEGGY.

I'd rather join Hannah's old maid class. You can have him, Dolly.

DOLLY.

Oh, thanks, I'll pass him on to Betty.

KITTY.

Imagine Betty married to a man like that. She's lucky to be away.

MRS. DARLING.

Here's a letter from your Aunt Elizabeth. Another complaint about Betty, I suppose. That girl! I imagine she's driving Elizabeth out of her mind. (*Opens letter and starts to read.*)

KITTY.

Betty's in luck. Think of it! School in New York and Aunt Elizabeth's motor car!

MRS. DARLING.

(*Gasping.*)

Good Lord!

GIRLS.

(*Together.*)

What is it?

What on earth's the matter?

Has something happened?

MRS. DARLING.

Betty's coming home.

GIRLS.

Coming home?

MRS. DARLING.

Yes. Coming today.

KITTY.

What has happened?

MRS. DARLING.

Elizabeth doesn't say. But she says she can't

have the responsibility of Betty any longer. She's been expelled, too. Expelled! Think of it!

PEGGY.

Isn't that just our luck?

MRS. DARLING.

Expelled! Her aunt pays for her schooling and she gets expelled! Oh, that wretched girl! (*Gets up and walks the floor.*) After all her aunt has done for her.

KITTY.

It's probably only one of her pranks.

MRS. DARLING.

Only one of her pranks! It has been her pranks that have kept us all in hot water ever since she could walk.

PEGGY.

Poor Betty!

MRS. DARLING.

Coming today! Well! I'll teach her to get expelled. I'll—(*Telephone bell rings suddenly. It is on the rear wall R. of the doorway.*)

PEGGY.

I'll answer. (*Runs to telephone.*)

MRS. DARLING.

It isn't enough that I've got four of you to marry off, but that the youngest, the one to go last, should torment the life out of me—

PEGGY.

Hello. * * Hello. * * Miss Darling? This is Margaret Darling. * * Oh, Miss Katherine Darling. * * (*KITTY jumps up; she motions her away.*) I'll take the message. (*Her hand over the transmitter, to KITTY.*) Go away!

It's for me.

KITTY.

PEGGY.

(*Holding KITTY off.*)

Oh, Mr. Wentworth's butler. * * (*All are transfixed except KITTY, who seems disappointed.*) Yes. * * Mr. Percy Wentworth will call this morning? Why, of course she will be at home. * * Very well. (*Hangs up receiver.*)

MRS. DARLING.

(*Suddenly beaming.*)

Now that is a piece of good luck. Kitty, do you hear? Percy Wentworth is coming to call this morning. Well, are you dumb?

KITTY.

I don't want to see him. (PEGGY and DOLLY *exclaim in shocked surprise.*)

MRS. DARLING.

Are you out of your senses? A boy that can buy and sell everybody in this place when he comes of age!

KITTY.

Yes, when he comes of age. He's years younger than I am.

MRS. DARLING.

But think of his money.

KITTY.

I don't want his money. Any way, he's a perfect fool.

DOLLY.

Oh, Kitty, he's ever so good looking.

KITTY.

And he's shorter than I am.

MRS. DARLING.

I declare, I don't know what you want; money, position, youth.

KITTY.

I want a real man.

MRS. DARLING.

The best catch, the *only* catch in Stockbridge, and you talk like that! Now, I want all this novel reading and poetic writing stopped. There are a good many million less men in the world than there were before the war. For a few generations you will have to take not the sort of husband you *want*, but the kind you can *get*.

DOLLY.

Mother, I'm crazy about Percy Wentworth.

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, but unfortunately Kitty is the one he is in love with.

KITTY.

Calf love.

MRS. DARLING.

When you can't get roast beef, a veal cutlet will do very well.

HANNAH *rushes in, U. L.*

HANNAH.

Look, look! Here comes Miss Betty, bag and baggage!

ALL.

What!

Betty here already?

Goodness me! (*Etc.*)

(*They run to the door and presently BETTY is heard.*)

BETTY.

(*Outside.*)

Hello, there, folks! Ooee! Anybody home? Hello there, everybody!

All shout and talk at once as BETTY passes the window, R., and meets them at the door. MRS. DARLING remains in the room, having crossed over to R. C. The girls are delighted to see her. She is dressed in a smart summer traveling suit, very grown up. Her hair is beautifully done. She carries a traveling bag and an umbrella.

(The three following speeches are spoken together.)

KITTY.

Oh, Betty, how wonderful you look. What a stunning cape.

PEGGY.

My goodness, Betty! What in the world has happened at school?

DOLLY.

For the love of goodness! What are you home for? Peggy, look at her clothes!

BETTY.

(Kissing them all around.)

Kitty dear, I'm glad to see you. Hello, Peg, you old goop. Dolly, my goodness, you're getting fat!

MRS. DARLING.

(Sternly and with folded arms, as she eyes her fourth daughter.)

Well? *(There is a silence that might be cut with a knife.)*

BETTY.

(With a weak little smile and a lower tone.)

Oh, hello, Mamma! *(Goes over and kisses her mother on the cheek; then stands looking at her and waiting for the storm to break.)* You—you are looking awfully well.

MRS. DARLING.

Thank you. It's a wonder your conduct hasn't put me on a bed of sickness. Now I want to know the meaning of this.

BETTY.

Meaning of what?

MRS. DARLING.

Don't answer me that way. And what are you doing with your hair done up, and with this outfit? You are dressed like a grown-up woman.

BETTY.

Why, I am a woman. I'm past seventeen and—

KITTY.

That cape is old enough for me.

MRS. DARLING.

Take it off. (*BETTY does so ruefully.*) Give it to me. (*BETTY does so.*) Now you sit down. *All of you sit down.*

(*KITTY, PEGGY and DOLLY sit on the sofa in the order of their names. BETTY seats herself L. of table and MRS. DARLING on R.*)

MRS. DARLING.

Now, to begin with, where did you get this outfit?

BETTY.

I won it.

MRS. DARLING.

What do you mean by "won it"? (*BETTY does not answer, but looks at her glove.*) Have you been betting again? (*Still no answer; the girls look at each other.*) Answer me.

BETTY.

Yes.

(*All exclaim their displeasure.*)

BETTY.

Well, you see it was this way. It wasn't my bet, it was Angela Simmons'. She has a lot of money and she's in the senior class. She bet me that cape against my bead bag that I won from Aunt Elizabeth, that I couldn't get the faculty to let us have a dance in the gym on May Day, and I won.

(All exclaim in astonishment.)

MRS. DARLING.

And that dress?

BETTY.

I won that from Aunt Elizabeth.

MRS. DARLING.

For what?

BETTY.

She bet I couldn't run her car. And I did.

MRS. DARLING.

Have you done anything but *bet* since you've been in New York?

BETTY.

I should say I had. I've had a perfectly wonderful time.

MRS. DARLING.

Your Aunt Elizabeth has been very kind to give you this opportunity. And now I understand that the end of it all is that you have been expelled in your freshman year.

BETTY.

Yes; isn't it disgusting? *(Turning to her sisters and beginning to talk very brightly.)* Oh, girls, if you had only seen the—

MRS. DARLING.

(In a loud, stern voice.)

That will *do!* *(Silence instantly.)* Now, young woman, what is this about your being expelled?

BETTY.

(*With a sickly smile.*)

Oh, have you heard about that?

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, I have.

BETTY.

Oh!

MRS. DARLING.

I should say it *was* "oh!" I've just got your Aunt Elizabeth's letter about it.

BETTY.

Well, then, we don't have to discuss it, do we?
(*Starts to rise.*)

MRS. DARLING.

Sit down in that chair and tell me what you have been doing to get yourself expelled. What new disgrace have you put upon us all?

BETTY.

Well, you see, Daisy Hunter in the sophomore class was crazy about an awfully cute chap up at Columbia. (*Getting interested in the story at once, the girls are enthralled.*) Her people thought they were too young to marry, and Daisy cried herself sick about it. We girls thought she was going into a decline, and he was just as bad—missed all his classes; nearly died from drinking home-brew, and went all to pieces. (*The girls all exclaim in sympathy.*) Daisy told me all about it, and I fixed up a plan for them to run away and get married.

MRS. DARLING.

Elizabeth Darling!

BETTY.

Well, you wouldn't have the poor girl die, would you?

KITTY.

Oh, go on.

PEGGY and DOLLY.

Yes, do.

BETTY.

Well, I borrowed Aunt Elizabeth's car after Hal had got a license, and I took Daisy for a drive. Then I got rid of Aunt Elizabeth's chauffeur.

PEGGY.

Oh, how?

BETTY.

I bet he couldn't find me a bunch of wild flowers, and while he was off looking for some I took the wheel, turned back toward town, picked up Hal, took them to the City Hall and they were married.

KITTY.

Wonderful!

PEGGY.

Perfect!

DOLLY.

Adorable!

BETTY.

Wasn't it?

MRS. DARLING.

Go on.

BETTY.

Of course Daisy's people, and Hal's, were furious. And they came to the school, and the papers got hold of it, and the faculty said I had ruined the reputation of the school and all that—and—so they expelled me, and here I am.

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, here you are. A nice outlook, too. Four girls on my hands, and you, the *baby*, covering us with disgrace! (*Breaks down and begins to cry.*) No money; no prospects; and now *this*!

BETTY.

(*Going to her, much affected.*)

Don't cry, mamma; I'm sorry.

KITTY.

(*Beginning to cry, too; the other girls follow suit.*)

We might as well be buried alive.

PEGGY.

Yes; we'll never get out of this hole.

DOLLY.

I wish *I'd* been Aunt Elizabeth's namesake.

BETTY.

I really am sorry. If *I'd* realized—(*rising*)

MRS. DARLING.

If you'd realized! The same old song. Did you ever do anything in your life but get into mischief? From the time you could walk you've kept everybody around in hot water. But I'll settle you, miss. You take off that dress and stop putting on these *old* airs. If you are going to stay at home, you will be what you are, the youngest member of the family. I'll decide what you shall wear after this.

BETTY.

But, mamma—

MRS. DARLING.

If you'd take less interest in marrying off your schoolmates, and a little more in keeping up the family dignity, your poor sisters might have a chance. I'm expecting your cousin, Eddie Darling, to pay us a visit today.

BETTY.

(*Excitedly.*)

Really?

MRS. DARLING.

(*Goes to door U. L.*)

Yes, really. And if you don't behave yourself I'll lock you in your room until he has gone. And no more bets, young woman; no more bets. (*Exits U. L.*)

BETTY.

(*Running over to C. The girls gather around her.*)

Who is Cousin Eddie?

PEGGY.

Aunt Katherine's son.

DOLLY.

He's coming today.

BETTY.

What'll you bet he's good looking?

KITTY.

No more bets.

PEGGY.

Betty, Kitty's got a beau.

BETTY.

Goody! Who is it?

PEGGY.

Wait till you hear.

BETTY.

Tell me. This suspense is killing me.

PEGGY.

Percy Wentworth.

BETTY.

Who's he?

DOLLY.

His uncle is the man who has bought the old Robinson house on the hill for a summer place.

BETTY.

Then he must have a lot of money. Hooray for you, Kitty!

KITTY.

My dear, he's only nineteen.

BETTY.

The angel child! Where did you meet him?

KITTY.

Mrs. Gordon introduced us at church and he asked to come home with us.

BETTY.

But why didn't he take somebody his own age?

DOLLY.

I wish he would.

KITTY.

Oh, it's only puppy love.

BETTY.

Marry him for his money. He must be rich.

PEGGY.

I think she's got somebody else in her head.

DOLLY.

Yes, Kitty has taken to mooning ever since she came back from her visit to Aunt Margaret in Trenton.

KITTY.

All right, then, I have.

DOLLY.

And she is very mysterious about that copy of Sonnets from the Portuguese.

PEGGY.

Yes, never without them in her pocket.

BETTY.

Come on now, Kitty, own up. Who's the Romeo?

KITTY.

No Romeo. He's—he's—oh, it isn't anything.
(*Very self-conscious.*)

DOLLY.

Oh, isn't it! She's fibbing, girls.

PEGGY.

Make her tell us, Betty.

BETTY.

You're not in love with a married man, I hope?

KITTY.

I don't know.

GIRLS.

(All at once.)

What?

My goodness!

You don't *know*?

KITTY.

Why, you see—oh, it happened a month ago. I took a notion to wander through the woods on the old Robinson place. I got caught in a mass of barbed wire, and while I was trying to untangle myself, a very stunning man came along and helped me.

DOLLY.

A stunning man?

BETTY.

His name, please.

KITTY.

I don't know.

PEGGY.

What was he like?

KITTY.

(Floundering.)

Very—very—well, charming and—and—

BETTY.

And—?

PEGGY.

How old was he?

KITTY.

About thirty-five, I should think; and with such beautiful manners.

BETTY.

Did he know who you were?

KITTY.

No.

DOLLY.

How adorable! So romantic!

KITTY.

He flirted a little, and—

BETTY.

(With a wink at the other girls.)

And you didn't, of course.

KITTY.

Why, I was nice; he had helped me to get out of that horrid barbed wire, hadn't he?

PEGGY.

(To BETTY and DOLLY.)

Only gratitude, my dear, nothing else.

BETTY.

What about the Sonnets from the Portuguese?

KITTY.

The book fell out of his pocket, and when we parted at the Robinson gate he asked me to keep it as a memento.

DOLLY.

What an adorable adventure.

PEGGY.

And you never said one word about it.

KITTY.

What was the use? I'll never see him again.

BETTY.

But perhaps he is one of the Wentworths.

KITTY.

(Gloomily.)

No, there are only two, Percy and his uncle, who isn't down here yet. No, it was some stranger. I'll never see him again.

BETTY.

Does mother know?

KITTY.

No, indeed. She'd have a fit at my picking up an acquaintance like that.

BETTY.

You're not the only one who's had an adventure. I have been going some myself.

KITTY.

Betty, what do you mean?

PEGGY.

Do tell us, Betty.

BETTY.

(Mysteriously.)

Come on over here. *(She goes to the sofa; they all follow and the four girls squeeze down on the seat together.)* Promise you won't tell.

GIRLS.

(Raising their right hands.)

We promise!

BETTY.

Well, my dears, you haven't heard the end of my escapade in helping out Daisy. The worst is yet to come. *(They all exclaim in dismay.)* Coming back with the car alone, I got into a mix-up with a milk wagon, and a traffic policeman arrested me for running a car without a chauffeur's license.

GIRLS.

A r r e s t e d ?

BETTY.

(Smiling.)

Yes, wouldn't that thrill you?

PEGGY.

Awful!

KITTY.

If mother knew *that*!

BETTY.

If you tell her I'll murder you.

DOLLY.

Go on. I've got shivers down my back.

BETTY.

Well, the judge was very nice and made the fine very light, but I had no money.

DOLLY.

Heavens, did they send you to jail?

BETTY.

No, I didn't even have to tell Aunt Elizabeth.

KITTY.

How was that?

BETTY.

Because my hero was there.

PEGGY.

Your hero?

BETTY.

Yes, the best looking thing.

DOLLY.

Adorable!

BETTY.

He had just been arrested, too, for speeding. So he offered to pay my fine.

KITTY.

And you *let* him?

BETTY.

What could I do? Of course I told him it was only a loan.

PEGGY.

How much was it?

BETTY.

The judge let me off with ten dollars on consideration that I was so young, so fair and so innocent.

DOLLY.

But did you ever see him again?

BETTY.

Yes. When I was changing trains at the Junction, he was there with his car and he drove me home.

KITTY.

(*Amazed.*)

Here? He drove you to the door?

BETTY.

Not much. I got out at the corner and walked.

PEGGY.

Oh, what is his name?

BETTY.

Isn't it lovely. I don't know.

DOLLY.

Everybody has a romance but you and me, Peggy.

BETTY.

(*With a sigh.*)

Well, it's all over now. We're all stuck here in Stockbridge for life. Except you, Kitty. Marry that child husband and get us out of here.

KITTY.

I'd rather die an old maid.

PEGGY.

And be buried with a copy of Sonnets from the Portuguese in your hand.

MRS. DARLING *enters from U. L. with a gingham dress on her arm.*

MRS. DARLING.

Now, miss, you get out of those duds and into something a little more suitable. March!

BETTY.

What will you bet it's too short? (*Going toward her mother.*)

MRS. DARLING.

I am not betting. BETTY.

My trunk will be right up, and Aunt Elizabeth has given me a very pretty dinner dress.

MRS. DARLING.

Well, if you think you're going to be expelled from school and then sit around in dinner dresses, you're very much mistaken. You will help about the house.

BETTY.

Don't I get a day off when I first come home to the bosom of my family?

MRS. DARLING.

You do not. Go along now. (*Shoves her out U.L., and turns to the girls, who have scattered. KITTY is at the table looking at her Sonnets. DOLLY up at the door, and PEGGY putting away her hat and sewing material.*) What were you all whispering and squealing about? (*No answer.*) I asked you—

DOLLY.

(*Excitedly.*)

Oh, mother, here comes Percy Wentworth, in his tennis flannels. Oh, he looks too adorable!

KITTY.

I'm going. (*Starts L.*)

MRS. DARLING.

You will do nothing of the kind. (*Untying her big white apron.*) Peggy, take my apron away. (*PEGGY takes it and the sewing things out U. L.*) Katherine Darling, you will stay where you are.

And you will make yourself agreeable to Mr. Wentworth. The idea! (*She is up L. C. ready to receive. PEGGY runs in again U. L. and places herself near sofa. KITTY is R. of table. DOLLY is by desk U. L., giggling hysterically.*) Dolly, stop your giggling.

PERCY WENTWORTH enters the porch and is about to knock. He is a small but good looking youth of nineteen, dressed in tennis flannels and wearing a straw hat. He is a shy but very sentimental boy, and it is a peculiarity of his temperament that he is constantly falling in love. So his manner is rather moonstruck. At the same time he is a gentleman and has a rather shy, naïve charm.

PERCY.

Is—er—is Miss Darling in?

MRS. DARLING.

(*Feigning surprise.*)

Oh, dear me! Is this—can this be Mr. Wentworth? Do come right in. (*Going up and almost hauling him in.*) How charming of you to surprise us like this.

PERCY.

Didn't my man telephone that I was coming?

MRS. DARLING.

Oh, yes, so he did. But that was the surprise I meant.

(*PERCY is gazing around the room as if seeking someone. His eyes first light on PEGGY.*)

PERCY.

Oh, how do you do?

MRS. DARLING.

You know Margaret, of course, my second.

PERCY.

Oh—ye—yes. (*He turns up a little and meets DOLLY's eyes as she comes down.*) Oh, how do you do?

MRS. DARLING.

You've met Dorothy, my third.

PERCY.

(*Growing very much embarrassed and miserable until he spies KITTY across R.*)

Oh, Miss Katherine!

MRS. DARLING.

Ah, now we know who you came to see.

PERCY.

Oh, no, really, Mrs. Darling. It's such a pleasure to meet you all.

MRS. DARLING.

Won't you sit down? (*She motions him to sit L. of table and gives DOLLY and PEGGY a signal to get out, which they refuse to do.*) Isn't it warm this morning? (*She goes over to the sofa and seats herself. KITTY sits R. of table, very bored and quiet.*) But in that great big house of yours, you must be quite comfortable. (*Again waves the girls off, but they hang on and go back of the sofa and look interestedly at PERCY. DOLLY especially seems to admire him.*) Still you must find it lonely, don't you?

PERCY.

(*Not listening, but gazing rapturously at KITTY, is suddenly conscious that he is expected to answer.*)

No—not at all. Er—yes. Yes—I mean, of course not!

(*KITTY stares straight ahead, quite unmoved by all this.*)

MRS. DARLING.

What did you say, Kitty? (*Giving her a sign to wake up and entertain PERCY.*)

KITTY.

Nothing.

MRS. DARLING.

Poor dear, she's been writing poetry all the morning, Mr. Wentworth. And you know how exhausting *that* is.

PERCY.

(*Happily.*)

Oh, do you write poetry, Miss Katherine?

KITTY.

I scribble a little.

PERCY.

How lucky you are—to be able to clothe your feelings in words. It must be tremendously—er—you know—and everything.

DOLLY.

(*To PEGGY, in low voice.*)

Isn't he adorable?

PEGGY.

(*In a half whisper.*)

Shut up!

MRS. DARLING.

You must get Katherine to show you some of her poems. They are so full of feeling and—and things.

PERCY.

I should love to see them. May I?

KITTY.

I only write for my own amusement. I'm sure they would bore you.

PERCY.

Not at all. I have an idea we would find that many of our thoughts are alike. I can't write po-

etry, but I can *feel* it. I often have the most wonderful feelings, especially in the moonlight. Don't you like the moonlight?

KITTY.
(*Blankly.*)

Yes.

MRS. DARLING.

Oh, my dear Mr. Wentworth, I wish you could count the colds she has caught from walking in the wet grass watching the moon. I can see that you two have exactly the same tastes.

PERCY.

And that's the great thing, isn't it? To—to find people with the same tastes? That's what I tell my uncle.

MRS. DARLING.

Is your uncle coming down here this summer?

PERCY.

Oh, yes. That's why he bought the old Robinson place down here. You know, he is crazy about his military work. He is going to plan for a rifle range in this neighborhood.

KITTY.

No?

PEGGY.

Is it possible?

DOLLY.

Oh, wonderful!

(*PEGGY and DOLLY are all excitement.*)

MRS. DARLING.

When do you expect your uncle, Mr. Wentworth?

PERCY.

He came down from the city yesterday. We had a fearful row this morning.

MRS. DARLING.

A row?

PERCY.

Yes, he thinks I don't know my own mind. But I do, all right. (*With a significant look at KITTY.*)

MRS. DARLING.

Of course you do. Kitty, take Mr. Wentworth into the parlor.

KITTY.

(*Pouting.*)

But, mother—

MRS. DARLING.

Take Mr. Wentworth into the parlor.

KITTY.

Oh, very well. Won't you come in? (*She goes to the door and waits for him. He rises, very much pleased, and goes to door R.*)

PERCY.

After you. (*KITTY exits R. D. and PERCY follows.*)

DOLLY.

I think he's perfectly adorable.

PEGGY.

He is too young for Kitty, and too little.

MRS. DARLING.

Never mind. He's the best catch that will ever darken our door. (*Going L.*) I'll have Hannah serve some cake and lemonade. You girls keep out of the way. Your turn will come when Kitty's married and settled. (*Exits U. L.*)

PEGGY.

We'll be gray-headed before that happens, I guess.

DOLLY.

Why couldn't I have Kitty's luck?

PEGGY.

If he were only a little older—and taller.

DOLLY.

I think he's just as nice as he can be.

PEGGY.

I don't hear a sound from in there. I wonder if Kitty is freezing him out. (*Going to R. D. and listening.*)

DOLLY.

(*Joining her.*)

I wonder.

As they stand there with their backs to the room, BETTY enters from L. with her hair in pigtails and a short dress on. The girls do not hear her as she runs over on tiptoe.

BETTY.

(*Just behind them as they listen.*)

Boo! (*They give little screams and almost tumble back in the room, then back away. BETTY laughs.*)
What are you two doing?

PEGGY.

Now you've done it.

DOLLY.

You mean thing.

BETTY.

What's the matter?

KITTY.

(*Coming in from parlor, R.*)

What do you girls mean by acting like that? It's disgusting.

DOLLY.

It's Betty's fault.

PEGGY.

Oh, go on, you're glad to get away from him.

BETTY.

For goodness sake, who's in there?

PEGGY.

Kitty's admirer.

BETTY.

Percy? Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know.

KITTY.

He's too silly for words.

HANNAH *enters with tray containing cake and lemonade.*

HANNAH.

The minute a man enters the house, you've got to feed him. Here, you girls, take this. I can't be bothered serving with all I've got to do.

PEGGY.

Hush, Hannah, he'll hear you! (*Takes tray from HANNAH.*) Dolly and I will serve him.

DOLLY.

Oh, that would be heavenly. (*PEGGY and DOLLY rush into the parlor with the tray.*)

KITTY.

I will not talk to that idiot another minute.

HANNAH.

(*Going back to her kitchen.*)

That's right, honey. That little whipper-snapper! Don't you bother with him.

KITTY.

I shall tell mother. Come on, Hannah, and stand by me. (*Exits with HANNAH U. L.*)

BETTY.

Beggars mustn't be choosers. (*Goes over to parlor door and peeks in. Sounds of DOLLY giggling. A motor horn is heard outside. BETTY runs to the*

door, then in great excitement jumps up and down and waves her hand as if at someone.) Wait! Stop! Come in. Do come in. (*After a moment she rushes back, smooths her hair and primps a little.*)

Presently JACK VAN LOON, a well set up young man, enters. He is charming, humorous, polished, impertinent, insinuating and delightful. About twenty-three.

JACK VAN LOON.

(*From the doorway.*)

Well, look who's here!

BETTY.

That's just what I say. Won't you come in?

JACK.

So this is where you live when you're at home.

BETTY.

This is where we die of loneliness when we're at home. Won't you come in?

JACK.

(*Coming in.*)

And who are we? (*Sits in chair L. of table.*
BETTY in chair R. of table.)

BETTY.

Myself and my three older sisters.

JACK.

Married?

BETTY.

No, single.

JACK.

All of them?

BETTY.

All three.

JACK.

What's the matter with this town?

BETTY.

All the men are either married or impossible.

JACK.

That *is* tough. What made you come back here?

BETTY.

I couldn't help myself. My aunt was paying for my school there, and I—I got expelled—and sent home. I'm finished.

JACK.

Finished? You? Never!

BETTY.

Oh, yes, I am. If the other girls can't get a husband, how do you think I can? I'm the youngest of the lot.

JACK.

Why, you've got the best chance of all. Why doesn't your father scare up a match or two?

BETTY.

I have no father.

JACK.

Then tell your brothers to get busy.

BETTY.

We haven't any brothers.

JACK.

What is this? An Adamless Eden? (*She nods.*) Well, this *is* serious. No wise guardians, old friends of the family, uncles or things? Nothing like a masculine relative to shoo along the victims.

BETTY.

Nothing in the male line nearer than a distant cousin in Ohio.

JACK.

How did a woman with four daughters come to move to such a place as this?

BETTY.

My father lost all his money before he died ten years ago. My grandfather left this place to my mother, and there was nothing to do but move here. Each of us is named for an aunt that has given each of us an education, and sent us her cast off clothes.

JACK.

But you showed yourself a pretty good little manager the way you helped your chum get married. Can't you do something for your sisters?

BETTY.

In marriage there must be two. I can only furnish the bride. Oh, say, why don't you marry one of them? Kitty is pretty, and Peggy is clever, and Dolly is—is—is good natured.

JACK.

And you? (*With a smile.*)

BETTY.

(*Archly.*)

Oh, I'm not offering myself.

JACK.

Unfortunately I am not a marrying man.

BETTY.

(*Indignantly.*)

I hope you don't think that I was hinting.

JACK.

Certainly not. I won't say that I'm not *interested* in a girl I've rescued from imprisonment, though.

BETTY.

(*Jumping up.*)

Sh! If my mother ever finds that out! I'm going to earn my fine and pay you, though, if I have to go out scrubbing to do it.

JACK.

(*Rising.*)

Never mention it again.

BETTY.

By the way, if I *should* get ten dollars' worth of scrubbing and scrub it out, I wouldn't know where to send it to you. You never told me your name. And I couldn't catch it that day in the police court.

JACK.

Prisoners don't have names; only numbers.

BETTY.

You won't tell me? What if my mother comes in? What shall I say?

JACK.

(*Taking both her hands playfully.*)

Tell her—tell her—

MRS. DARLING *enters from U. L.*

MRS. DARLING.

Betty, whose motor is that at the door? (*Sees the strange young man familiarly holding BETTY's hand.*) Well, what is all this?

BETTY.

(*At a perfect loss to know what to say.*)

Oh, mamma—is—is that you?

MRS. DARLING.

(*Coming down stage, sternly.*)

It certainly is. (*Glaring at JACK.*) And who is this person, if you please?

JACK.

(*Floundering, but with an attempt to pass it off.*)

Who, I?

MRS. DARLING.

Yes.

BETTY.

(*Pointing to JACK.*)

Who is this?

MRS. DARLING.

Exactly. Who is this? (*Then with a sudden flash of inspiration.*) No! It isn't—is it? It is! (*Rushing delightedly toward him and grabbing his hands. JACK and BETTY are dumbfounded.*) My dear Eddie! How stupid of me! But then, as I haven't seen you since you were a baby, it isn't surprising that I didn't know you.

JACK.

(*Taken off his feet and dumb with astonishment.*)

Er—no, of course it isn't, is it?

MRS. DARLING.

My dear boy, aren't you going to kiss your aunt?

JACK.

(*Immediately deciding to play the game and meet the situation.*)

You bet I am! (*Throws his arms around her and kisses her.*)

BETTY.

Goodness!

MRS. DARLING.

Why didn't you call me, Betty, and tell me that Eddie was here?

BETTY.

Why, I was—(*swallowing hard*) I was just going to.

JACK.

Isn't this corking?

MRS. DARLING.

(*Happily excited.*)

Wait until I call the girls. They will be delighted. (*She rushes up to door L., calling.*) Girls, girls.

Come and see who's here! (*Disappears for a moment or two.*)

JACK.

(*Quickly, to BETTY, down R. C.*)

Who am I?

BETTY.

Mother's nephew, Edgar Darling, from Oberlin, Ohio.

JACK.

(*Repeating.*)

Mother's nephew, Edgar Darling, from Oberlin, Ohio. Righto! Play the game, Cousin Betty.

BETTY.

You'll get caught.

JACK.

What will you bet I don't get all your sisters engaged before I do?

BETTY.

It can't be done.

JACK.

What will you bet?

BETTY.

I'm off betting for good.

JACK.

One last bet.

BETTY.

I haven't any money to bet.

JACK.

Bet something else.

BETTY.

What?

JACK.

I'll bet you three kisses, one for each sister.

BETTY.

Goodness!

JACK.

Are you game? Think of the poor girls.

BETTY.

All right; for their sakes, then.

MRS. DARLING *re-enters U. L., all smiles, with PEGGY and DOLLY following.*

MRS. DARLING.

Come, girls. Here's your Cousin Eddie. Give him a royal welcome.

PEGGY and DOLLY.

(Together.)

Oh, Cousin Eddie, I am glad to see you.

How do you do, Cousin Eddie?

(MRS. DARLING comes down L. BETTY is at R. JACK is at C. PEGGY comes down on his R. DOLLY on his L.)

JACK.

Are these my cousins?

MRS. DARLING.

(Beaming.)

Yes; Peggy and Dolly.

JACK.

I must kiss my Cousin Peggy. *(He does so.)*
And you, too, Cousin Dolly. *(Kisses DOLLY; then with an arm around each of them.)* I'm ever so glad I came.

(The girls are delighted; MRS. DARLING beaming, and BETTY laughing.)

KITTY *appears at door R.*

KITTY.

What's all the row about?

BETTY.

Come on, Kitty. It's your turn.

(KITTY comes down beside PEGGY.)

PEGGY and DOLLY.

Here's Cousin Eddie.

KITTY.

(Delighted.)

Oh, how lovely!

JACK.

(Without letting the other girls go.)

May I kiss you, Cousin Betty?

MRS. DARLING.

Why, of course.

(He takes a step forward and does so.)

JACK.

(With his arms full of girls.)

Isn't this a lovely family party?

(All appear to agree with this thoroughly except BETTY, who now wears a little frown, as if she has begun to feel that JACK is overdoing it a trifle.)

CURTAIN.

BETTY'S LAST BET

THE SECOND ACT.

SCENE: *The same. That afternoon.*

As the curtain rises sounds of laughter and talking come from off L. and a rattling noise now and then of silver on the plates, etc.

BETTY runs in laughing, holding her napkin in her mouth as though to stifle her laughter. She throws herself on the sofa L. in a convulsion of merriment. She has pretended to be choking and coughing as she came in. Presently PEGGY follows with a glass of water, looking concerned.

PEGGY.

(*At C.*)

Here, drink this, Betty. It will stop your coughing. (*Going to sofa and offering it to BETTY.*)

BETTY.

(*Through her laughter.*)

I don't want it. I made an excuse to get away, that's all.

PEGGY.

Well, I don't wonder you're laughing. Isn't Cousin Edgar amusing?

BETTY.

Oh, he's wonderful. Wonderful!

PEGGY.

(*Puts water on desk up L.*)

And so charming. He doesn't act a bit like a man

who's going to be a professor of—of—oh, *you* know—digging up old things.

BETTY.

Do you mean archæology?

PEGGY.

Yes, that's it.

BETTY.

Is *that* Cousin Edgar's specialty?

PEGGY.

(*Goes over and sits above BETTY on sofa.*)

Yes, Aunt Katherine wrote and told mamma. He's going on a digging expedition to ancient Greece.

BETTY.

(*Thinking of JACK.*)

He ought to know that.

PEGGY.

What did you say?

BETTY.

(*Recovering herself.*)

I say he ought to know his business.

PEGGY.

I wish he could make us a longer visit.

BETTY.

You're not getting a crush on him?

PEGGY.

No—but—(*with a sigh*) I shall never love anybody.

BETTY.

Here. Here. Here! (*Turning PEGGY toward her.*) Have you a guilty secret, too?

PEGGY.

(*With a gush of emotion.*)

Oh, Betty, if I tell you something, will you promise to keep it a secret?

BETTY.

(Holding up her right hand.)

Word of honor, word of honor, word of honor,
amen!

PEGGY.

It's awfully hard to tell.

BETTY.

What'll you bet I can't guess? You're in love.

PEGGY.

How did you know?

BETTY.

Just a hunch when I saw you look like a dying
calf. Who is it?

PEGGY.

You'll never guess.

BETTY.

I'll bet my silk umbrella against your flesh crepe
blouse that I can.

PEGGY.

No betting.

BETTY.

It's—It's—It's—give up.

PEGGY.

It's the Honorable Hamilton Moriarity.

BETTY.

Goodness! *(Hops over on the end of the sofa.)*
It sounds like the Ancient Order of Hibernians!

PEGGY.

He's the youngest member of the Legislature and
a wonderful orator.

BETTY.

(Sitting up again.)

Where did *you* ever hear him orate?

PEGGY.

From the end of a train just before election last
fall.

BETTY.

My word! Rather a long distance acquaintance.

PEGGY.

Just the same he saw I had on that screaming green hat, and he kept looking at me while he was speaking, oh so eloquently! And he kept on looking at me, and it gave me *such* a thrill. It was love at first sight. (*She is looking very sentimental. Rises and goes C.*)

BETTY.

(*Looking at her and nodding.*)

I'll say it was. And you didn't meet him at all.

PEGGY.

No, his train had to pull out for the next station.

BETTY.

(*Going over to PEGGY, R. C.*)

What'll you bet he never knew you were alive; you and your green hat?

PEGGY.

He did because he took a little bunch of pansies out of his buttonhole and threw them at me. (*Pulling at a tiny chain, she brings up a locket from inside her blouse and opens it.*) Look! I pressed a couple of them. They are in here! See?

BETTY.

Pansies for thoughts. How romantic!

PEGGY.

(*Ecstatically.*)

Oh, Betty. I think of him all the time.

BETTY.

What's the good of wasting your time thinking of someone you'll never see again?

PEGGY.

How can I help it?

BETTY.

Think of somebody else.

PEGGY.

I can't. Oh, if you could only hear him make a political speech.

BETTY.

What is he? A Democrat or a Republican?

PEGGY.

I can't remember now. But when he speaks you feel that the other party is a worm.

BETTY.

Does the family know?

PEGGY.

No; I haven't told a soul but you.

BETTY.

Well, Peg, you might as well throw away those pansies. You can't hang on to a forlorn hope until the Honorable Moriarity campaigns for the next election.

PEGGY.

Why not?

BETTY.

Why, by *that* time he'll have forgotten you are on this planet.

Noise of several voices talking at once as MRS. DARLING, JACK, KITTY, DOLLY and PERCY enter from the dining room, L. JACK has KITTY on his R. and MRS. DARLING on his L., his arm around each of them. PERCY and DOLLY bring up at the rear. Everybody is beaming. Apparently JACK has been making himself agreeable and entertaining.

JACK.

(As they come down C.)

Now, aunty, confess that I don't look one bit as I did when you last saw me when I was five years old.

MRS. DARLING.

(Taking his shoulders and turning him toward her.)

Yes—umm—yes; there's a little expression—no, you don't look like either your mother or your father.

JACK.

Yes, queer, isn't it? Still, I have their disposition.

MRS. DARLING.

Which?

JACK.

Both—er—that is, I have my moods. Sometimes mother will say, "Now you're your father's own boy." And then when Dad's sore on me he'll say, "That's your mother all over again." Funny, isn't it? *(BETTY bursts into a roar of laughter at this fib. JACK turns to her in mock surprise.)* What are you laughing at, Elizabeth? *(Turning back to MRS. DARLING.)* That one is Elizabeth, isn't it?

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, Betty for short. *(JACK turns up C. where BETTY is. PEGGY is over R. of table. PERCY has strolled over by the doorway and looks out on the porch. DOLLY is down on her mother's L. but staring up at PERCY, who turns now and then and catches her eye on him, but is unembarrassed and turns his eyes away immediately.)*

MRS. DARLING.

(Beckons KITTY to come to her.)

Kitty, is this the way to entertain Mr. Wentworth?

KITTY.

(Very softly to her mother.)

I'd rather entertain Cousin Edgar.

PEGGY.

I'll entertain Cousin Eddie.

BETTY.

(Overhearing.)

No, I'm going to entertain Cousin Ed.

MRS. DARLING.

Well, we can't *all* entertain Ned. Dolly? *(Turns and sees DOLLY at her L. looking at PERCY.)* Dolly, come here.

DOLLY.

(Coming to her.)

Yes, mamma.

MRS. DARLING.

(In a lower tone so that the others may not hear.)

Stop staring at Mr. Wentworth. He'll think you're idiotic.

DOLLY.

(With a spontaneous burst of feeling.)

Oh, mamma, he has such adorable eyes.

MRS. DARLING.

(Sternly.)

Has he? Well, his adorable eyes are all for your sister Katherine. You had better remember that. He doesn't know that you are on earth.

(DOLLY turns up stage disconsolately. The other girls are hovering around JACK, R. C.)

JACK.

(Indicating PERCY.)

Who is this harmless youth crushed on?

BETTY and PEGGY.

Kitty.

JACK.

(*To KITTY.*)

What? And you leave him flat like that! Here, now; take him right in the drawing room and—and—(*faking and fumbling for a word*)—show him the family album!

KITTY.

(*Pettishly.*)

Oh, the idea.

JACK.

(*In a loud voice to everybody as he tries to get rid of them.*)

All of you go with Mr. Wentworth into the drawing room. I know you want to see Kitty's pictures when she was a little girl.

PERCY.

Yes, I should love to, but—

JACK.

Sure you do. You see, Mr. Wentworth, I am the head of the house today; the only man in the family.

PERCY.

(*Coming down to MRS. DARLING.*)

I suppose I *should* be going. My uncle was to come on the one o'clock train. He will wonder where I am.

MRS. DARLING.

Do stay a little longer. Kitty is so delighted to have you. We *all* are. It is so neighborly of you. The girls are all crazy to have you stay. (*He looks around at them; they are perfectly mute, all eyes for JACK.*) Aren't you delighted to have Mr. Wentworth with us, girls? (*They all make assent.*)

PERCY.

It's—it's—so pleasant here, and it's so lonesome

over at our big place. And—and—well, I *will* stay a *little* longer.

JACK.

(Coming over and slapping him on the shoulder.)

That's right, old chap. Stay as long as you like. We're all tickled to death. Auntie likes you. I'm strong for you. And the girls are crazy about you. *(The girls shyly dissent from this; all but DOLLY.)* Yes, they are; but they're ashamed to own it. Go right in the drawing room now and let them make a fuss over you. *(Leading him to the parlor door.)* Go in there and sit down and enjoy yourself. Have a cigarette.

PERCY.

I—I don't smoke.

JACK.

Oh, don't you? Well, then, just go in and sit down. Only *go in*. *(Shoves PERCY off R., then turns to MRS. DARLING and the girls.)* Now, then, auntie, take the girls in there and all enjoy yourselves. *(As they pass in order.)* Go on, Dolly. Show him the picture of you when you were six months old, fat and bald. *(Passes her in.)* Peggy, you make her show it to him; and a few snapshots of you. *(Passes her in.)* Go on now, Cousin Kitty. Tell him a funny story.

KITTY.

(Hanging back protestingly.)

But I don't—

JACK.

(In her ear, passing her in.)

Go on. The Wentworths are millionaires. *(Turning to MRS. DARLING.)* Make her entertain him, auntie. *(Shoves the mother after them, grabs the door knob and shuts the door, holding it closed for a moment. Then leans up against it as if exhausted after all his fibbing.)* Whew!

BETTY.

(*Laughing appreciatively.*)

Well, that *was* clever.

JACK.

Talk about a strain! If your mother asks me any more questions about my family, I shall cut and run.

BETTY.

You've sidestepped very cleverly so far.

JACK.

Where do I live when I'm at home, Cousin Betty?

BETTY.

Oh, my goodness, I've forgotten the place. Somewhere in Ohio and you're an only child.

JACK.

(*Repeating.*)

Somewhere in Ohio and I'm an only child.

BETTY.

You can't keep *this* up.

JACK.

I shall keep it up until I win that bet.

BETTY.

But if mother should catch you, and she's *sure* to.

JACK.

Leave aunty to me.

EDGAR DARLING *appears on the porch at the door. He is a small, serious young man, wearing dark clothes and horn spectacles and carries a suitcase and a bag, both large. He looks rather travel stained and his clothes need pressing. He knocks on the side of the doorway. They do not hear him.*

BETTY.

I nearly choked at the table, the way you fibbed your way through everything.

(EDGAR *knocks* again. *They are so interested in each other that they pay no attention.*)

JACK.

It did take a bit of nerve to deal with your mother's questions.

BETTY.

If she only guessed. Whew!

(EDGAR *knocks* again; *still no attention.*)

JACK.

What do you imagine she'd do if she knew? Have me arrested for obtaining a dinner under false pretences?

BETTY.

Of course. And she'd be perfectly right, too. We don't know a thing about you, you know. Even I don't. (*Going over L. C. to JACK.*)

EDGAR.

(*Rather timidly, but in a good strong voice.*)

I beg your pardon!

JACK.

(*Turns and sees him.*)

Eh?

BETTY.

What's that?

EDGAR.

(*Coming into the room.*)

I don't suppose you heard me knock.

JACK.

(*Suddenly serious.*)

No, we didn't.

BETTY.

(*To JACK.*)

Well, look who's here!

EDGAR.

Is this the residence of Mrs. Darling?

JACK and BETTY.

Who?

EDGAR.

Mrs. Darling.

BETTY.

(*Grabbing JACK's arm and speaking low.*)

I have a horrible thought.

JACK.

(*Same business.*)

So have I. (*They look at EDGAR, who is standing down R. C.*)

BETTY.

What is your name?

EDGAR.

Edgar Pettingill Darling.

BETTY.

(*To JACK, significantly, meaning "It is Cousin Edgar."*)

It is.

JACK.

Yes, isn't it?

EDGAR.

(*With a beaming smile at BETTY.*)

Is this—can this be Cousin Elizabeth? (*BETTY is too flabbergasted to know what to do.*)

JACK.

(*With a warning gesture.*)

Hush! (*To EDGAR.*) Cousin Elizabeth? What do you mean by Cousin Elizabeth? Are you addressing me?

EDGAR.

No, no, of course not. I thought that this young lady might be my Cousin Elizabeth.

JACK.

(Trying to think of something to say.)

My dear friend. You—you—does she *look* like your Cousin Elizabeth?

EDGAR.

Well, I can't say as to that. I've never seen her.

JACK.

(Going over to him.)

But, my dear fellow, you can't go around butting into people's houses and claiming every young woman as your cousin. First thing you know you'll find yourself in trouble.

EDGAR.

(Becoming alarmed.)

I wonder if it is possible that I have taken the wrong street?

JACK.

You certainly have.

EDGAR.

I am on my way to excavate one of the ancient buried cities of Greece, so I—

JACK.

Then you are entirely off the track. This town is dead, but it isn't buried yet.

EDGAR.

No, I mean that I am sailing from New York the day after tomorrow, and I—*(Putting down his luggage.)*

JACK.

(Interrupting.)

Well, the boats don't leave from here.

EDGAR.

(*Getting more and more dazed and nervous at JACK's attitude.*)

I know, but I—

JACK.

Your mistake was in leaving New York. A little absent-minded, aren't you?

EDGAR.

But my mother wrote my Aunt Mary and Aunt Mary wrote my mother that if I would stop off and make her a visit—

JACK.

Visit? Why, I thought you were going to excavate.

EDGAR.

Well, I am, but—

JACK.

Don't you think it's going to be pretty hot work at this time of year?

EDGAR.

Yes, but—

JACK.

Well, anyway, you have my good wishes. Good luck to you, old man. (*Grabs his hand and shakes it; with the other he hands him one of his bags.*)

EDGAR.

But if I could see my Aunt Mary—

JACK.

She'd be mighty proud of you, I'm sure. You ought to bring her a ruin or two as a souvenir. (*Handing him his other piece of luggage.*)

EDGAR.

(*Now thoroughly impatient and losing his temper.*)

Say, look here, sir! I want to see my Aunt Mary.

JACK.

I don't blame you. If I had an Aunt Mary I should want to see her, too.

EDGAR.

(Crossing him and speaking to BETTY, who has taken refuge on the sofa and is trying to keep a straight face.)

Perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me—

JACK.

Oh, *that* isn't your Aunt Mary.

EDGAR.

(Angrily turning to him.)

Will you kindly mind your business, sir!

JACK.

My business? What do you mean, my business?

EDGAR.

I mean that I'm talking to this young lady.
(Turning to BETTY again.)

JACK.

Yes, but my dear fellow, you've never been introduced.

EDGAR.

(To BETTY.)

I beg your pardon. My name is—

JACK.

Yes, Edgar Pettingill. We know.

EDGAR.

(Turning to him, very much annoyed.)

No, no, Darling. *Darling!*

JACK.

Please don't call me darling. I hate pet names.

EDGAR.

I am speaking to this young lady.

JACK.

You musn't call *her* darling. It's too familiar.

BETTY.

What is it, Mr. Pettingill?

EDGAR.

(*Correcting her.*)

Darling.

BETTY.

I'm afraid you will have to excuse me.

JACK.

(*Taking his arm.*)

Mr. Pettingill, it is a matter of regret, but we shall have to ask you to leave.

EDGAR.

But if you would only—

JACK.

Did you see the motor car in front of the house?

EDGAR.

Yes.

JACK.

(*Very gravely.*)

The owner is in this house.

BETTY.

(*Nodding as if this were unusual.*)

Yes, that's true.

JACK.

He is at this moment arranging certain family matters. I wouldn't advise you to interrupt.

EDGAR.

But if you would only tell me—

JACK.

No, no. I'm not at liberty to betray family secrets.

EDGAR.

But if you would direct me.

JACK.

(*Turning him up stage.*)

You take the road straight to your left and keep going.

EDGAR.

But that leads to the station.

JACK.

Of course. You want the train back to New York, don't you?

EDGAR.

But I don't want to leave without seeing Aunt Mary.

JACK.

Oh, she'll understand.

EDGAR.

(Turning at the door.)

I wonder if the station master would know anything about my aunt?

JACK.

He is a very peculiar man—takes very little interest in other people's affairs. I wouldn't bother him if I were you.

EDGAR.

I know, but if—

JACK.

You wait for me at the station. I will come down and help you find your aunt. I have an idea that is the family that moved to Hartford last week. If I remember, Darling was the name. I'm *sure* you will find a Darling family in Hartford. *(Getting him out on the porch.)* Follow the road to the left. You can get a train for Hartford every half hour. Good-bye. Sorry you made such a mistake and wasted your valuable time. Good luck with your ruins. Ta, ta! *(Waves his hand; then comes in exhausted.)* Whew! Getting him off to ancient Greece is *some* job!

BETTY.

But that is my real Cousin Edgar. This is awful. What if he comes back?

JACK.

He won't. I've got him so discouraged he'll be glad to go back to New York and wait for the boat.

BETTY.

What if my mother finds out?

JACK.

If I'm to win my bet I'll have to take a chance.

BETTY.

That motor of yours out in front will get mamma guessing.

JACK.

I don't care. I want those kisses.

BETTY.

I don't believe you will ever win them. (*Sits in chair L. of table.*)

JACK.

Won't I? Wait and see.

BETTY.

Well, I'm waiting.

JACK.

(*Comes down C. and L. of* BETTY.)

Where are all the men, anyway? Why, in a house like this with four pretty girls in it, there should be a waiting list.

BETTY.

We are poor. That's our trouble. No man worth having wants to marry us.

JACK.

No man *wants* to marry anybody, if he's left to himself.

BETTY.

Why do they, then?

JACK.

Why, the girl's father or brother or uncle or some male relative scares them into it.

BETTY.

Oh, I don't believe that.

JACK.

When a fellow hears the words, "What are your intentions toward our little girl," he weakens, and then it's Ta, ta, de dum; dum de day. Da, day, de de, dum de da! (*Sings first strains of the Mendelssohn Wedding March.*)

BETTY.

Really?

JACK.

Sure! That's what you need around here; a male relative to bring them up to the scratch.

BETTY.

(*Rising.*)

We've first got to find the men.

JACK.

We've got one in there. And he would be easy. He's so shy I could scare him into anything.

BETTY.

He's crazy about Kitty, but she won't look at a boy three years younger than herself.

JACK.

What's his name? I didn't catch it.

BETTY.

Wentworth. Percy Wentworth.

JACK.

Wentworth, Wentworth? No relation to Colonel Richard Wentworth of the National Guard?

BETTY.

Percy is his nephew.

JACK.

The poor fish! Why, that's one of the wealthiest families in the State.

BETTY.

They've just bought the old Robinson place on the other side of town. Ever since Percy saw the girls in church he has been crazy about Kitty.

JACK.

And she is cool to him?

BETTY.

Ice.

JACK.

I'll soon fix matters.

BETTY.

(Going closer to him.)

Mother will forgive you anything if you'll do that.

JACK.

I am a male member of the family and I—

BETTY.

What?

JACK.

For the time being.

BETTY.

Oh, that's better.

JACK.

And I'm going to win that bet, Betty.

BETTY.

(Tauntingly.)

Yes, you are!

The parlor door opens and KITTY enters.

KITTY.

Why don't you two come in here?

JACK.

Percy doesn't want to see any more of us.

KITTY.

(Going up to the porch door.)

What I want to know is who owns that big motor

that's been standing in front of the house since before lunch.

JACK.

(Joining her.)

I wonder.

BETTY.

(Following.)

Yes, so do I.

JACK.

(Innocently.)

It must be Percy's.

KITTY.

No, he says it isn't. See, there's his little run-about.

PEGGY enters from R., closing the door behind her.

PEGGY.

Kitty, mamma wants to know what you are running away for?

KITTY.

(Coming down C.)

I can't stand that stupid boy any longer. Besides, I want to get acquainted with Cousin Eddie.

PEGGY.

(Going R. C.)

Well, so do I. I'm not going to stay in there. Percy Wentworth didn't come to see me, anyway.

JACK.

(Coming down R.)

I'm very flattered; but what's the matter with Percy? He looks like a very worthy youth to me.

KITTY.

Who cares about worthiness? All he can do is to blush and stammer Yes or No. Mother has had to do all the talking in there.

JACK.

Yes, but think of the Wentworth money. Mrs.

Percy Wentworth will be able to wear imported gowns and spend the winters in Palm Beach.

BETTY.

(Listening over R.)

Mother is calling you, Kitty.

The parlor door opens and MRS. DARLING enters, closing the door behind her.

MRS. DARLING.

(Heatedly.)

What in the world is keeping you all? Kitty, I'm ashamed of you.

BETTY.

So am I, mother. She's treating that poor chap vilely.

JACK.

(Gravely shaking his head.)

It's a pity. And I'm afraid my Cousin Kitty is losing the greatest chance of her life.

MRS. DARLING.

Exactly what I say!

(Crossing to sofa L. where JACK joins her. BETTY is up L. C. PEGGY near table R. C.)

JACK.

Aunty, we must bring this girl to reason. *(He sits above MRS. DARLING on the sofa.)*

MRS. DARLING.

It's high time. Peggy, what are you hanging around for? Go out into the kitchen and help Hannah.

PEGGY.

(Pouting.)

Oh, mamma!

MRS. DARLING.

(Sternly.)

Do as I bid you! *(PEGGY goes out L. reluctantly.)*

You can see, Edgar, what a trial my life is with four stubborn, self-willed girls.

JACK.

(Pretending great sympathy.)

Yes, indeed, aunty. I can see what you are up against. I'm amazed at Katherine. Here is a perfectly good rich young man hanging around her, and she doesn't even give him so much as a pleasant look.

(KITTY is sulking down R. C. BETTY, up near the desk, is highly amused.)

MRS. DARLING.

(To KITTY.)

Do you hear that, Miss?

KITTY.

Yes, but Edgar is going to Greece. What does it matter to him whether I am satisfied or not?

MRS. DARLING.

Satisfied? If you think that after you are married you will be satisfied with *any* man, you are very much mistaken.

KITTY.

I'd be willing to be miserable with some one I *loved*; some one who was my *ideal*.

(JACK and MRS. DARLING exchange whispers.)

BETTY.

This chap is so young you can *train* him to be your ideal.

KITTY.

Thank you, that's too big a job.

JACK.

(With a wink at BETTY, he rises and goes L. C.)

Katherine, as the only male representative of the family, I shall now speak very seriously to you.

BETTY.

Listen now, Kitty.

KITTY.

(Pouting.)

Well, go ahead. I'm listening.

JACK.

Ideal men don't grow on every bush. Neither do rich suitors. I suppose what you want is a masterful man?

KITTY.

Of course.

JACK.

(In an oratorical manner.)

Which means that *he* will rule the roost; that you will be a slave instead of a queen. If you marry this modest youth, your will will be law. You will have beautiful gowns, smart motor cars and a magnificent home. And then, Katherine, look what you can do for your sisters.

MRS. DARLING.

(Beginning to weep.)

Yes, your poor little sisters.

KITTY.

(Much impressed by this appeal, and winking back her own tears.)

I do want to help the girls: but I'd rather be poor all my life than marry some one I don't love.

JACK.

Betty, I hope you will never be as selfish as your sister.

BETTY.

Try to love him, Kitty.

MRS. DARLING.

(Sniffing in her handkerchief.)

She won't listen to you, Edgar. The chance of her life, and she turns up her nose at it.

KITTY.

(Getting angry now.)

You're all taking a lot for granted. He's never proposed to me.

MRS. DARLING.

Because you don't give him any encouragement.

JACK.

Exactly! Why don't you lead him on?

KITTY.

I don't want to. Anyway, he's such a boy he doesn't know his own mind.

JACK.

Ah, then you should know it for him. *(Going over and putting his arm around her playfully.)* With such pretty eyes as yours, Kitty, you should be able to lead a man on.

KITTY.

(Flirting a bit with those eyes.)

Well, if he were like you, and—

BETTY.

(Not pleased at the picture she interrupts as she comes down.)

Come on, come on, get on with the war.

MRS. DARLING.

(Taken up with her own troubles.)

When I think of all the years of pinching and scrimping, and now—*(Breaks down and buries her face in her handkerchief.)*

KITTY.

I do want to help, mamma, but he is such a ninny.

JACK.

Believe me, a rich ninny is not to be sneezed at.

KITTY.

Well, even if I could make up my mind to marry him, he would never come to the point. He hasn't got spunk enough.

JACK.

I'll get his spunk up.

ALL.

How?

JACK.

Don't you know how?

KITTY.

No.

BETTY.

How?

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, for goodness sake, tell us.

JACK.

Make him jealous.

ALL.

Jealous?

JACK.

Yes. No man is thinking seriously of marriage until he gets a few twinges of jealousy. He may be impressed with a girl; fond of her; in love with her. But he won't get beyond the flirting stage unless you arouse his jealousy of a rival.

KITTY.

Who would Percy Wentworth be jealous of in this dead old town?

JACK.

(A little stumped, but a bright idea coming.)

Why—er—er—of— Of me!

ALL.

Of you?

BETTY.

(A little hurt at this idea.)

Do you mean to say that *you* want to marry Kitty?

JACK.

(*Gallantly.*)

I can think of nothing that would give me more happiness.

BETTY.

(*Miffed.*)

Well, the idea!

JACK.

In fact, I'd like to move to Salt Lake City and marry all four of you. But I have to think of my excavations. I'm wedded to my ruins.

KITTY.

I don't get the point.

BETTY.

Neither do I.

MRS. DARLING.

I'm a little bit in the dark too, Edgar.

JACK.

Why, the thing to do is to let Percy think that I am madly in love with Kitty, and that I have come here from—from—(*Floundering.*)

BETTY.

(*On his L.*)

From Ohio.

JACK.

(*Catching the word.*)

From Ohio—I have come from Ohio; interrupted my journey to Italy—

BETTY.

To Greece.

JACK.

Yes, yes, I mean Greece, of course. Interrupted my journey to Greece in order to propose. You must tell him that I—Wait! He might overhear us. We had better discuss this a little further from that parlor.

MRS. DARLING.

(Rising and going to the door U. L.)

Come upstairs to my room.

JACK.

(Following.)

Righto! Come on, Kitty. You too, Betty. This is a family conference.

BETTY.

A family conference? Shall I call Peggy and Dolly?

MRS. DARLING.

Peggy's busy.

JACK.

And Dolly's doing her bit holding down the ninny. Come on, aunty. We'll settle Percy's hash, and all live happily ever after. *(Exits with his arm around Mrs. Darling.)*

BETTY.

Isn't he wonderful?

KITTY.

(With a little determined air.)

He certainly is. And I am going to profit by his advice one way or another. *(She runs out U. L.)*

BETTY.

(Thoughtfully.)

"One way or another?" I wonder what she meant by that? Oh, this is a scream!

BETTY runs after KITTY laughing, and almost collides with PEGGY, who is entering from U. L. wearing a kitchen apron.

PEGGY.

Where are you all going?

BETTY.

Up in mamma's room. Cousin Edgar is calling a

meeting of the Matrimonial Committee. You keep your eye on Dolly and Percy. (*Runs out U. L.*)

PEGGY.

(*Aggrieved.*)

Well, I like that! I'm going to strike. (*Tears off apron, tosses it in the closet down L. and is running up to follow the family, when there is a knock at the door of the porch.*)

It is HAMILTON MORIARITY, *looking very handsome and stunning. PEGGY stops.*

HAMILTON.

I beg your pardon, but I wondered if I could inquire if—(*PEGGY has come to the door and they recognize each other. He breaks off.*)

Y o u!

PEGGY.

Y o u!

(*They stare for a moment, then he recovers first.*)

HAMILTON.

Is it possible that you are the—

PEGGY.

Yes, I am. And you?

HAMILTON.

Yes, I'm the man.

PEGGY.

I mean you're the one who made that beautiful speech last fall at the station?

HAMILTON.

Was it beautiful? It should have been. For I was thinking of you every moment.

PEGGY.

(*Delightedly.*)

No, not really?

HAMILTON.

Or rather I was thinking of that little green hat.

PEGGY.

(Disappointedly.)

Oh!

HAMILTON.

(Gallantly.)

And of course the pretty face under it.

PEGGY.

Won't you come in?

HAMILTON.

(Coming into the room.)

Thank you.

PEGGY.

(Feeling rather shy, but happy.)

Won't—won't you sit down? *(Indicates chair L. of table.)*

HAMILTON.

Thank you. *(He pulls the chair out and turns it facing her as she sits on the sofa.)*

PEGGY.

It's—it's funny that you should happen to be in our little town again. Are you going to make another speech?

HAMILTON.

No, I won't have to make any more speeches here until I ask the folks to vote for me again.

PEGGY.

But you do speak in the State House?

HAMILTON.

Oh, yes, when the other fellows let me.

PEGGY.

I expect you put them all in the shade.

HAMILTON.

Well, I don't know about that. I haven't blown

the rest of them off the map with my eloquence yet. It isn't politics that brings me to Stockbridge today. I came to see Colonel Richard Wentworth.

PEGGY.

Oh, he doesn't live here.

HAMILTON.

No. But I believe his nephew is here, and I thought he might give me the information I am looking for.

PEGGY.

Yes, he *is* here—this afternoon.

HAMILTON.

His man gave me to understand that he is a very frequent visitor here.

PEGGY.

Yes, he is.

HAMILTON.

Well, I don't blame him; especially if he has ever seen you as *I* saw you in that pretty green hat.

PEGGY.

(*Quickly.*)

Oh, he doesn't come to see *me*.

HAMILTON.

What's the matter with him? Is he blind?

PEGGY.

You *are* Irish, aren't you?

HAMILTON.

There's no blarney in that.

PEGGY.

Shall I call Mr. Percy Wentworth? He's in the parlor. (*Rising and starting to cross to R.*)

HAMILTON.

(*Also rising and intercepting her.*)

No, wait. I'm in no hurry now. I'd rather talk

to you. I wonder if you knew that I threw a bunch of pansies at your feet as my train pulled out that day?

PEGGY.

Yes, I thought perhaps you meant them for me.

HAMILTON.

I hoped they would keep me in your mind until they withered.

PEGGY.

(Unconsciously clasping the locket.)

No, I—I kept them.

HAMILTON.

(Looking at her ardently.)

You little angel!

PEGGY.

(Pleased but a little embarrassed at his boldness.)

Won't you sit down again? I'll call my mother.

HAMILTON.

I'll meet your mother later. What do you say to jumping in my car and taking a spin? *(Going to the door.)*

PEGGY.

Splendid! I'll get my hat.

HAMILTON.

Never mind your hat; just as you are.

PEGGY.

(Excitedly.)

Oh, all right.

(PEGGY and HAMILTON go out C. D. laughing and chatting.)

Presently HANNAH enters with a tray containing a pitcher of lemonade and glasses. She marches across to the parlor door and stands in front of it, calling.

HANNAH.

Miss Dolly! Miss Dolly!

DOLLY comes to the door in a moment.

DOLLY.

(Coming out and closing door behind her.)

What is it, Hannah?

HANNAH.

Miss Peggy told me to bring the young man some more lemonade. Though why he should be guzzling so soon after lunch I don't see. Where's the rest of the family?

DOLLY.

I don't know.

HANNAH.

What are you doing in there talking to Miss Kitty's beau?

DOLLY.

Oh, Hannah, we're looking at the photographs. *He* doesn't think I'm fat. Isn't that wonderful?

HANNAH.

Do you mean that you've got that little clam shell to open his mouth?

DOLLY.

Well, he doesn't talk much. But he's so interesting.

HANNAH.

When I was serving the luncheon I thought he was deaf and dumb.

DOLLY.

(Reprovingly.)

Oh, Hannah!

HANNAH.

That's a man for you! Either they won't let you get a word in edgeways, or they're about as chatty as a bump on a log.

DOLLY.

(Taking the tray.)

Give me that lemonade. I think you're horrid.

HANNAH.

(Opening the door for her.)

What are you doing; getting mashed on your sister's beau?

DOLLY.

Sshh! He'll hear you! *(She exits R. D. with lemonade. HANNAH closes the door after her.)*

HANNAH.

(Muttering to herself, starts for L.)

Crazy over the men. The girls are all alike. *(Glances up through the door out beyond and stops.)* Well, my land of love! Who's that Miss Peggy's going off with in an ottymobile? And two more cars in front of the house. Folks'll think we're having a county fair here. *(Starting off L.)* Never saw such an upsetting day in my life! Men, men, all over the place. *(Noise of KITTY's voice heard off L.)* Now what?

KITTY, *running in from L. and almost colliding with HANNAH, catches her by the arms and turns her around.*

KITTY.

Look out, Hannah! Look out! There's someone passing. I want to see him.

HANNAH.

My sakes alive, what are you doing? I never in all my born days! *(She goes out in a fluster, L.)*

(KITTY starts toward the outer door. Then, realizing that someone is entering the porch, she stops and retreats a step or two and recovers herself.)

RICHARD WENTWORTH *enters the porch and knocks at the door casing. He is thirty-five, good looking and dressed in the uniform of a Colonel of Infantry of the National Guard.*

RICHARD.

I beg your pardon!

KITTY.

(Laboring under great excitement and considerable emotion.)

Will you come in? *(She smiles at him rather familiarly.)*

RICHARD.

Thank you. *(He comes into the room and recognizes her.)* No, it isn't—Yes, it is!

KITTY.

Have you come for your Sonnets from the Portuguese?

RICHARD.

Not at all. I came to make an inquiry, and here I find you! My goddess of the barbed wire.

KITTY.

Won't you sit down?

RICHARD.

Thank you. *(She goes to the sofa and motions him to the chair R. of table.)* Just think of finding you again like this. I don't suppose I can flatter myself that you have given me two thoughts since our meeting in the woods that day?

KITTY.

Oh yes, I'm sure I've given you two.

RICHARD.

But not more than that.

KITTY.

I'm not good at arithmetic. I see you are in uniform. I never dreamed that you were an army man.

RICHARD.

The National Guard. We are going into summer camp, and I've managed to influence the powers that be to hold it near Stockbridge here.

KITTY.

Oh, that *will* wake things up. Sonnets and war are your studies?

RICHARD.

My diversions. Have you read the Browning sonnets?

KITTY.

Yes, they are beautiful.

RICHARD.

Do you remember the one—

“The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since I first heard the footsteps of your soul”?

KITTY.

(*Rapturously.*)

Yes, that is my favorite.

RICHARD.

(*Delighted.*)

Mine, too. (*Hitches his chair nearer the sofa.*)
Do—do you believe in love at first sight?

KITTY.

Why do you ask?

RICHARD.

Because, *I* do.

KITTY.

But you're a flirt.

RICHARD.

What makes you say that?

KITTY.

They say that all soldiers are. Is it the uniform that does it?

RICHARD.

That's all nonsense. I'm not a flirt.

KITTY.

Oh, but you are.

RICHARD.

I've never flirted with you.

KITTY.

Then what would you call our first meeting?

RICHARD.

Romance.

KITTY.

It meant nothing to you.

RICHARD.

What makes you say that? (*Hitching his chair still nearer.*)

KITTY.

Because you never took the pains to find out who I was.

RICHARD.

Well, I was called back to New York and—How do I know that you took pains to find out who *I* am?

KITTY.

I *don't* know who you are.

RICHARD.

Fifty-fifty! Why not call it quits?

KITTY.

Just what I say: you're a flirt.

RICHARD.

I have thought of *you* so many times that I made up my mind to look you up as soon as I came down.

KITTY.

You will never convince me you have given me

two thoughts. Besides, for all I know you may be a married man.

RICHARD.

No, I'm a hopeless bachelor.

KITTY.

Hopeless?

RICHARD.

Yes, in our family we specialize in bachelors.

KITTY.

(Sarcastically.)

Oh, *do* you? In spite of your sonnet reading, and all that?

RICHARD.

Surely you know that all bachelors aren't women haters, any more than all husbands are lovers.

KITTY.

(Rising as if to dismiss him.)

I believe you said you called on an errand.

RICHARD.

(Rising.)

Yes, as I was passing the house I saw my nephew's runabout outside. I should like to speak to him.

KITTY.

(Astonished.)

Do you mean that Percy Wentworth is your nephew?

RICHARD.

Yes, of course.

KITTY.

But you are so young.

RICHARD.

(Laughing.)

Yes, his father was the eldest and I was the youngest of the family. However, I'm old enough to handle Percy.

KITTY.

Then *you* are Richard Wentworth? *You* live on the Robinson place! It was *your* barbed wire I was caught on!

RICHARD.

Exactly. I bought the place for a summer home as it was near the new rifle range.

KITTY.

(*Dropping into her chair again.*)

Oh, how stupid I've been!

RICHARD.

(*Reseating himself.*)

Not at all. It was delightful to meet my little neighbor in such an unconventional way.

KITTY.

But your nephew?

RICHARD.

I shall pack him back to the city with a tutor. He's a very backward student and he's been wasting a lot of precious time down here this summer. I'm trying to get him through Columbia, though it's a hopeless job, I'm afraid.

KITTY.

It happens that he's calling here now.

RICHARD.

That's what I thought when I saw his car. I'm going to confide in you. His valet tells me that he has fallen into the clutches of a very designing woman here in Stockbridge.

KITTY.

He has? It's a wonder I haven't heard of it.

RICHARD.

It seems she is a great deal older than he. I must put a stop to it before she kidnaps him.

KITTY.

(Mentally putting two and two together, and getting more and more indignant.)

Yes, I would, if I were you. *(She rises, quite furious now.)* The sooner you send him away from Stockbridge the better.

RICHARD.

(Rising and not observing her anger.)

I wonder if by chance you know who this cradle snatcher is that he is so mad over?

KITTY.

Cradle snatcher?

RICHARD.

Her name, I believe, is Miss Katherine Darling.

KITTY.

I *do* know her.

RICHARD.

Good! Then I wish you would tell me something about her.

KITTY.

I am Katherine Darling.

RICHARD.

(Staggered.)

N o!

KITTY.

Yes.

RICHARD.

(Stammering.)

B—b—but—

KITTY.

(With flashing eyes.)

I am the cradle snatcher.

RICHARD.

B—b—b—but you—

KITTY.

I am the elderly kidnapper who is trying to steal your precious nephew.

RICHARD.

(Horried at what he has got himself into.)

But my dear Miss— Oh, good Lord!

KITTY.

Mr. Percy Wentworth has been a horrible bore and a perfect nuisance to me, though the rest of the family seem to like him. He's the sort of idiot that can never take a hint, and doesn't know when he's snubbed. I wouldn't have him if he were a hundred times as rich and the last man on earth, and the sooner you ship him off to New York again the better I shall be pleased. *(Marches up stage to the doorway and looks out.)*

RICHARD.

(In the dust at the mess he has made of everything, follows her up humbly.)

But my dear Miss Darling, there has been a horrible mistake.

KITTY.

I should think there had.

RICHARD.

It's all the fault of that valet. The man is an infamous liar. I'll make Percy discharge him. I—I—what can I say? My nephew isn't worth your beautiful little finger.

KITTY.

(Waving her hand.)

Take him away!

RICHARD.

Indeed, I beg your pardon a thousand times for my mistake.

KITTY.

I'll call him. *(Starts down R. for parlor door.)*

RICHARD.

(Grasping her hand and detaining her C.)

Wait! Don't go! I've been an idiot!

KITTY.

That's perfectly true. But you can go, and take your sonnets with you. *(With her free hand she takes the little book of sonnets from one of the pockets of her dress and offers it to him over her left shoulder. He still has her left hand.)*

RICHARD.

Keep them. Throw them away. But do forgive my stupidity. I don't blame Percy or any man for falling in love with *you*. How could he help it?

KITTY.

(Turning and looking squarely at him.)

It is a very good thing for you that my family doesn't know how I've been insulted.

RICHARD.

But I never *dreamed*. I wouldn't have made that remark if I had known.

KITTY.

(With a sudden inspiration.)

Please let go my hand. What if my Cousin Edgar should see you?

RICHARD.

(Annoyed and a little jealous.)

Why should I give a whoop for your Cousin Edgar?

KITTY.

I don't know what he would do if he saw you holding my hand.

RICHARD.

What is it to him?

KITTY.

He is a jealous fiend. He is ready to kill your nephew.

RICHARD.

(Experiencing a pang of jealousy.)

Do you mean to say that you are engaged to your cousin?

KITTY.

(Lying beautifully.)

There's a sort of understanding. But I'm afraid I don't love him as I should to marry him. That is, not as I *could* love.

RICHARD.

(With a bit of desperation.)

Katherine, listen to me.

KITTY.

(Excitedly.)

Shh! Please go. I hear Edgar coming. And he is so violent.

RICHARD.

(Kissing her hand.)

Let him come.

KITTY.

(Acting frightened.)

No, no, he might injure you.

RICHARD.

(Recklessly.)

Let him—if it is for you.

KITTY.

(Trying to pull him toward the door up C.)

No, no! Do go!

RICHARD.

I won't go until I've had a chance to talk things over with you.

KITTY.

Oh, please, please! Don't run the risk of meeting him.

RICHARD.

(Now excited and losing his head.)

Where can I wait?

KITTY.

(Pointing to the parlor. He starts.)

In there with your nephew.

RICHARD.

(Stopping.)

No, no. I don't want to meet him. No.

KITTY.

Oh, dear. Edgar will see you!

RICHARD.

(Starting up L.)

In here, then.

KITTY.

(Almost screaming.)

No, no. You'll meet Edgar.

RICHARD.

(Rushing down to door lower L.)

How about this?

KITTY.

That's only a closet.

RICHARD.

It will hold me until you can get rid of your cousin.

KITTY.

(Terribly excited but also amused at the situation.)

Oh, dear. Don't let him find you!

RICHARD.

(Throwing her a kiss with his right hand and opening the door with his left.)

You are adorable!

KITTY.

Oh, don't let him hear you!

RICHARD.

(Going into the closet but looking out.)

Will you forgive my horrible mistake?

KITTY.

Yes, yes! *(Closes the door after him, leans against it and laughs silently. She then runs up and is about to go off U. L. when JACK enters.)*

JACK.

Oh, here you are!

KITTY.

(Finger to her lips.)

Hush! Come over here! *(Takes his arm and leads him over down R.)*

JACK.

(In a lower tone.)

Where is he? *(She points to the closet door.)* In there? *(She nods.)* What is it, a sitting room?

KITTY.

No, a closet. He's hiding from you.

JACK.

Did you scare him?

KITTY.

I tried to.

JACK.

Poor kid ! Where's Dolly?

KITTY.

In the parlor.

JACK.

Have you made him jealous?

KITTY.

I tried to. I told him we were engaged; that you were a jealous fiend, and that I was afraid you would kill him.

JACK.

He must have thought I had grown suddenly jealous since luncheon. Poor Percy! Now let us

see if my scheme works. If this doesn't bring him to the point of proposing, I don't know what will.

KITTY.

What do we do now?

JACK.

I shall terrify you, threaten you, and if he has the heart of a man he will come out and offer to knock my block off.

KITTY.

All right; go on and terrify me.

JACK.

(Striding over toward the closet door.)

Are you ready?

KITTY.

Yes. Be sure that he hears you.

JACK.

(Standing close to the closet and facing it when he speaks to KITTY, who stands just behind him.)

Kitty, I am not going to stand for your trifling any longer. *(Turning his head over his shoulder and whispering.)* Answer, answer.

KITTY.

(Whispering.)

What shall I say?

JACK.

(Loudly at the door.)

Ha, you'd better blush. I should think you *would* change color after the way you've been going on with that Wentworth fellow.

KITTY.

Oh, Edgar, please don't have one of your jealous fits again. I give you my word he has never tried to make love to me.

JACK.

(Over his shoulder.)

Good! *(Facing door again.)* Do you think I believe you? You torture me with your flirtations with that milksop. When I see you laughing and talking and smiling at him I see red. Something bursts in my brain and I want to kill—yes, kill!

KITTY.

Oh, Edgar, don't give way to one of your rages, please.

JACK.

(Shouting at the door.)

Don't argue with me. You make me feel I could put my fingers round your beautiful white throat and choke you!

KITTY.

(Screaming, but standing perfectly still behind him.)

Oh, Edgar. Don't, don't!

(There is a noise of falling glass in the pantry.)

JACK.

So, you have got your other lover in the closet. Now I know you are faithless.

DOLLY and PERCY run in from the parlor.

DOLLY.

What is all the noise about?

PERCY.

Has—has something happened? *(He has the family album in one hand and a glass of lemonade partly consumed in the other.)*

JACK.

(Turning in amazement at the sound of PERCY's voice.)

What are you doing there?

MRS. DARLING *comes on from L. with* BETTY.

MRS. DARLING.

What in the world?

BETTY.

My goodness, it's working!

HANNAH *follows them in.*

HANNAH.

My land of love, is somebody gettin' killed?

JACK.

Kitty, what are you up to?

KITTY.

Won't you all please go away?

MRS. DARLING.

I want to know what this is all about?

BETTY.

(*To* JACK C. *He is between* BETTY R. C. *and* MRS. DARLING L. C.)

Is the scheme working?

JACK.

I thought Percy was in that closet, but he is there.
(*Pointing.*)

POSITIONS.

DOLLY

PERCY

BETTY JACK MRS. D. KITTY

What *is* it?

MRS. DARLING.

(*From this point to the curtain the cues must be picked up quickly, and the dialogue go very fast.*)

JACK.

Someone is in that closet. I heard him.

HANNAH.

It's a burglar. (*The women scream.*)

JACK.

Have you got a gun?

KITTY.

(Now thoroughly frightened.)

Don't shoot. Please don't shoot!

JACK.

Percy, have you got a gun on you?

PERCY.

No, I never shoot.

JACK.

Who's got a gun? I'll get him out of there.

Who's got a gun? *(He turns to them.)*

BETTY.

(Who has been watching the door of the closet.)

Look, the handle turned!

KITTY.

All of you go away. *(Steps away from the door.)*

BETTY.

He's coming out!

(HANNAH, DOLLY and MRS. DARLING scream.)

DOLLY hides behind PERCY, who is frightened.)

KITTY.

(Shrinking away up above the door.)

This is awful!

The door is flung open and RICHARD strides out.

Everybody exclaims in astonishment.

PERCY.

(Thunderstruck.)

Uncle Dick!

JACK.

(Blinking.)

What the deuce!

BETTY.

That isn't a burglar.

HANNAH.

Nice goings on!

DOLLY.

(*To PERCY.*)

Is it your uncle?

MRS. DARLING.

What are you doing in my preserve closet, sir?
(*She is facing him.*)

KITTY.

Let me explain, mamma. (*Coming down beside*
RICHARD, L.)

MRS. DARLING.

Be quiet, Miss!

RICHARD.

Madam, I offer you my humble apologies.

MRS. DARLING.

How did you get in my closet, sir?

BETTY.

Yes, what are you doing in our jam?

KITTY.

Betty, will you keep quiet?

JACK.

As the head of the family, I want an explanation.

RICHARD.

(*With a ferocious look at JACK.*)

I don't know what you want, but what you will get is for you to say. I'll meet you outside and we can settle matters with or without gloves.

JACK.

I don't know you, but I'm at your service.

RICHARD.

(*To MRS. DARLING.*)

Madam, if you permit your daughter to marry that fellow, you will be committing a crime.

KITTY.

Never, never, I will never marry Edgar!

MRS. DARLING.

Kitty, who is this man? Do you know him?

KITTY.

Yes.

RICHARD.

My name is Richard Wentworth, madam, and if I have compromised your daughter, I—

JACK.

You have.

BETTY.

Yes, he has, mamma.

RICHARD.

I was going to say, madam, I wish to ask your daughter to consider me as a rival to this bully. I want to make her Mrs. Richard Wentworth if she will have me.

KITTY.

(Overcome with joy.)

Oh!

PERCY.

(Remonstrating.)

Oh, uncle!

RICHARD.

It was love at first sight, and I never realized it until I was in that closet. *(Turning to KITTY.)* What do you say?

KITTY.

What do you say, mamma?

MRS. DARLING.

What do you say, Edgar?

JACK.

What do you say, Betty?

BETTY.

I say *yes!*

JACK.

We say—

BETTY, JACK, KITTY, DOLLY, MRS. D. and HANNAH.
(*All shout together.*)

Yes!

RICHARD.

Your cousin doesn't seem to take it very hard.

KITTY.

He's crazy, anyway. .

(MRS. DARLING is shaking hands with RICHARD
and kissing KITTY.)

PERCY.

(*To DOLLY.*)

He's stolen my girl.

JACK.

(*To BETTY, as he raises his right arm with extended
forefinger.*)

O n e!

POSITIONS.

HANNAH.

(*Up L. C.*)

DOLLY. PERCY.

(*Down R.*)

BETTY. JACK.

(*Down C.*)

MRS. DARLING. RICHARD. KITTY.

(*Down L.*)

CURTAIN.

BETTY'S LAST BET

THE THIRD ACT.

SCENE: *The same. An hour later.*

As the curtain rises HANNAH with a tray of glasses is standing L. C. and talking to MRS. DARLING, who is in the closet. DOLLY and PERCY are sitting in chairs out on the porch.

HANNAH.

No, ma'am. What I say is, take a good long time to look a man over before you get up before a minister and swear to do all those things you hate like pison after you been married a while. (*A short pause.*) I think that for Miss Kitty to be engaged to a man that pops into her life like a jumping jack is taking awful chances.

MRS. DARLING *enters from the closet with two bottles of some sort of home brew.*

MRS. DARLING.

(*Paying no attention to HANNAH's grumblings.*)

I think this dandelion wine will be just the thing to celebrate the engagement with.

HANNAH.

Lord knows it was work enough digging up the blamed things and brewing it. I hate to see it all guzzled up by a parcel of men that none of us ever saw before.

MRS. DARLING.

Do stop your croaking, Hannah. It is simply marvelous that little Edgar, who was such a plain

child, should have turned out so charming and clever. And that a rich and important man like Colonel Wentworth should have met Katherine in such a romantic way.

HANNAH.

Romantic way? Shucks! I don't see—

MRS. DARLING.

(Wiping off the bottles.)

Of course you haven't heard about it. I hadn't until just now. It was all on account of a barbed wire fence and love at first sight. *(Putting bottles on the tray.)*

HANNAH.

I don't see what barbed wire has got to do with this here love at first sight. Love, my eye!

MRS. DARLING.

(Pushing HANNAH's arm to get her to move. They go R. C.)

Go on in now, Hannah, and put the tray on the little stand. We'll drink to the engagement. Yes, that's right; the small glasses. It's rather strong. I guess one bottle will be enough. *(Takes other bottle off tray and stands it on table.)*

HANNAH.

(Going up to parlor door.)

I should say so. All I hope is that Miss Kitty don't regret it all her born days. *(Exits grumbling into parlor R.)*

MRS. DARLING.

(Goes up to the porch door.)

Come, Dolly, and you, too, Percy. We are going to drink to your uncle's and Kitty's engagement. *(Leaves door and goes into parlor.)*

DOLLY enters, followed by PERCY, who has been crying.

DOLLY.

Come on in, Percy. We'll have to go in the parlor.

PERCY.

I'm not going in there. Do you think I'm going to let Uncle Dick gloat over me?

DOLLY.

My goodness, why do you let them see that you care?

PERCY.

I can't help it. (*He is down R. C., she is L. C.*)

DOLLY.

Kitty never really encouraged you, did she?

PERCY.

(*Drops into chair and weeps in his handkerchief.*)

• No, but your mother did.

DOLLY.

Well, mothers are like that. Especially where men are as scarce as they are here. I don't suppose Kitty thought you were really in earnest.

PERCY.

In earnest? Why, I wish you could see the way my appetite fell off. I couldn't take any interest in anything, and I got so I only shaved every other day.

DOLLY.

(*Going over and putting her hand on his shoulder.*)

I'm sorry you take it so hard.

PERCY.

(*Really furious.*)

I've a good mind to go in there and make a fuss. What if I'd stolen *his* girl like this?

DOLLY.

Oh, don't do that. It wouldn't help you. It wouldn't change Kitty's feelings.

PERCY.

I wasn't thinking of her. It's my dignity that's been insulted. A man can't stand for that, you know.

DOLLY.

Yes, but he's your uncle. How can you stand on your dignity with him?

PERCY.

(Blubbing.)

You bet if he was a stranger I'd go in there and punch his face.

DOLLY.

Is Kitty the only girl you ever loved?

PERCY.

I should say not. I've been in love about five times now. Turned out wrong every time, too.

DOLLY.

(Disappointedly.)

Oh, you must be horribly fickle. *(Goes over L.)*

PERCY.

I wouldn't be if I could only get married. But Uncle Dick has stood in the way every time.

DOLLY.

Why?

PERCY.

(Furiously and rising.)

He says I'm too young. Isn't that a scream?

DOLLY.

Well, you aren't of age yet.

PERCY.

But you don't have to be of age to fall in love.

DOLLY.

(Casting sheep's eyes at him.)

I shouldn't think you'd want to marry a girl older than you.

PERCY.

What difference does that make?

DOLLY.

I suppose we've got to go in there.

PERCY.

If I go in there, I shall have to stand on my dignity and make them ashamed of the way they've treated me.

DOLLY.

Well, then, go ahead.

PERCY.

I—I—I don't know what to say.

DOLLY.

Come on into the garden and think of something.

PERCY.

All right, you help me. *(Wiping the traces of tears from his face with his handkerchief. He catches sight of the bottle.)* What's that?

DOLLY.

A bottle of mother's dandelion wine.

PERCY.

Let's drink to my revenge. *(Picks up the bottle.)*

DOLLY.

It makes me dizzy. Oh, Percy, I hope you're not a drunkard!

PERCY.

Would you care if I were?

DOLLY.

(Shyly.)

Yes, indeed, I would!

PERCY.

(*Earnestly.*)

I only take to liquor when I'm desperate.

DOLLY.

(*Reaching for the bottle.*)

Oh, Percy, I think you'd better not have it.

PERCY.

(*Retaining it.*)

Yes, I had! And anyway, I've got another reason for drinking today.

DOLLY.

What?

PERCY.

I hate to tell you.

DOLLY.

Oh, come on, do!

PERCY.

You won't despise me?

DOLLY.

Of course not!

PERCY.

Well, I want to get up some Dutch courage.

DOLLY.

What for?

PERCY.

You won't be offended if I tell you?

DOLLY.

Of course not.

PERCY.

Well, while I was in the parlor alone with you, I found out that—er—that—(*Too embarrassed to continue.*)

DOLLY.

What?

PERCY.

Sure you won't think I'm changeable if I tell you?

DOLLY.

(In happy anticipation.)

No, indeed!

PERCY.

Well, while we were sitting together and looking at the album, I found out that I like you better than I do Kitty.

DOLLY.

(Joyously.)

Do you? Oh, Percy! *(In a practical tone.)* Come on out and have your refreshment in the garden. We'll get a glass in here. *(Exits U. L.)*

PERCY.

(Following her.)

You see how perfectly you understand me? That's what I like. You're so sympathetic, Dolly! *(Exits U. L. after her.)*

HANNAH enters from parlor, R., followed by JACK.

HANNAH.

There they go into the dining room. *(Looking after PERCY and DOLLY.)*

JACK.

Don't call them back. Dolly is healing his wounded heart.

HANNAH.

Wounded fiddlesticks! That was nothing but calf love.

JACK.

Well, what's the matter with calf love? It's like the measles. You catch it while you're young, soon get over it and it leaves no scars.

HANNAH.

(Looking out the door.)

My land of love, if there isn't another car!

JACK.

Yes, Colonel Wentworth's.

HANNAH.

What'll the neighbors think?

JACK.

That Mrs. Darling has a parking concession.

BETTY *runs in from the parlor.*

BETTY.

Let's have some music to celebrate. (*Begins to select a record.*)

JACK.

That's right. The house of Darling must celebrate this occasion. (*Assists her.*)

HANNAH.

(*Starting off U. L.*)

I guess I'd better get into my kitchen or the house of Darling won't have no dinner tonight. And it looks to me as if we was going to have a mob here. (*Goes off growling.*)

JACK.

Hannah doesn't seem to take this affair in the right spirit.

BETTY.

(*Putting dance record on machine.*)

Hannah's all for the four of us being old maids.

JACK.

No!

BETTY.

She took the job of cook with mother years ago just because there were no men around.

JACK.

Yes, I notice she is the only one that doesn't fall for Cousin Edgar.

BETTY.

(*Starting the music.*)

Wait until we get found out. Won't she triumph with her "I-told-you-never-to-trust-a-man"?

JACK.

(*Going to her and holding out his arms.*)

It's a pity to waste all that good dance music.

BETTY.

Yes, isn't it? (*They begin to dance.*)

JACK.

All I've got to say is, Kitty put it over all of us.

BETTY.

(*As they dance.*)

I can't believe it's all true yet.

JACK.

It looks as if I'd win that bet.

BETTY.

You can't put that sort of thing over more than once. Peggy and Dolly are not so clever.

JACK.

No, but as the only male member of the family, I'll go gunning for husbands for them. (*They keep dancing around the room.*)

BETTY.

I wonder what became of poor Edgar?

JACK.

Oh, he's back in New York by now.

BETTY.

Poor thing! When mamma finds *that* out, I may as well pack and leave home.

JACK.

He'll dig one of his excavations and fall into it. You'll never hear from him again.

At this moment EDGAR with his luggage comes up on the porch. They do not see him.

JACK.

The poor fish. I feel sorry for him.

BETTY.

Yes, so do I. He looked so stupid.

(EDGAR is knocking, but they do not hear him.)

• JACK.

Yes, he may be clever in archæology. But as a business man he couldn't put over a deal to sell a twin-six limousine for the price of a tin lizzie.

BETTY.

I guess not.

(EDGAR steps inside.)

JACK.

Poor old Edgar!

BETTY.

Yes, poor little Eddie!

(At this point they bump into EDGAR up stage and almost knock him over. BETTY screams.)

JACK.

(Letting her go and jumping to the parlor door as KITTY and MRS. DARLING call out, "What's the matter?" from the parlor.)

All right! All right!

RICHARD appears at the parlor door.

RICHARD.

What's the trouble?

JACK.

Nothing. Nothing, old man.

RICHARD.

Didn't your Cousin Betty scream?

JACK.

Nothing at all. It's nothing—nothing at all.

RICHARD.

(Stepping into the room and seeing EDGAR, who is talking in a low tone to BETTY.)

Who is that fellow?

JACK.

(In an undertone.)

That? Oh, that's a peddler. Wants to sell us a patent chicken incubator that you can attach to the electric light. It will also heat a curling iron, grind the coffee and rock the baby to sleep.

RICHARD.

(Curious.)

Well, let us—

JACK.

(Turning RICHARD about and shoving him back through R. D.)

Go on in there and be happy with Kitty—hang you. I'll get aunty away in a jiffy. Go on in. *(Has shoved him back and now closes the door on him. Holds it for a moment and looks at EDGAR.)* See here, young man, I thought you were in New York.

BETTY.

He hasn't been back at all.

JACK.

What?

EDGAR.

No, you see—

JACK.

Now, look here. Your train should have gone an hour and a half ago.

EDGAR.

But there is a mistake somewhere. I want to find my aunt, Mrs. Darling.

JACK.

(Coming over to him C.)

You're strong on sticking to one idea, aren't you?
Sort of single-track mind, I guess.

EDGAR.

You told me to talk to the station master.

BETTY.

(L. of EDGAR, who is C.)

Yes, why didn't you do it?

EDGAR.

I did talk to him.

BETTY.

What did he say?

EDGAR.

He told me where to find my aunt.

BETTY.

(Faintly.)

Oh, did he?

EDGAR.

Yes.

JACK.

Well, then, take his advice and go and find her.

EDGAR.

But this is the house he described.

JACK.

This house?

BETTY.

Not *this* house?

EDGAR.

Yes, this is the one.

JACK.

Impossible!

BETTY.

Absolutely!

JACK.

Why, do you know what this house *is*?

BETTY.

Yes, that's what *I* say. *Does* he?

EDGAR.

But I was told that Mrs. Darling—

JACK.

See here, my friend. (*Walks him up to door.*)
Do you see those cars?

EDGAR.

Yes.

JACK.

How many are there parked in front of this house?

EDGAR.

Three.

JACK.

Did you ever see three cars parked in front of a private house before?

EDGAR.

Why, I—

JACK.

Of course not.

BETTY.

I should say not.

JACK.

(*Turning EDGAR about, facing the audience and coming down a few steps.*)

The fact is, there is a convention going on here.

BETTY.

Yes, indeed.

EDGAR.

A convention?

JACK.

(*Still hiding his arm.*)

Yes, a matrimonial convention.

EDGAR.

I never heard of such a thing.

BETTY.

You never heard of such a thing?

JACK.

The idea!

BETTY.

The *very* idea!

JACK.

Now, I ask you if your grandmother, or your great aunt, or whoever it is you are looking for, would be holding a matrimonial convention, wherever she was?

EDGAR.

No, I don't suppose—

JACK.

(Picking up a grip and handing it to him.)

Of course not. So don't waste any more of your precious time. I would advise you to get to ancient Greece as soon as possible.

BETTY.

(Handing him another bag.)

Yes, here's your bag. And I do hope you'll have a pleasant journey.

EDGAR.

(Now quite dazed.)

I was sure the station man said it was the fourth house on the left side of the—

BETTY.

Isn't that queer?

JACK.

(Bustling him up and off.)

I told you he was a queer fish. Don't depend upon what he says, but *catch that next train!* *(Hustling him out the door.)*

EDGAR.

Thanks very much.

BETTY.

You're quite welcome.

JACK.

You bet you are. (EDGAR goes off the porch R. and they look at each other and almost wilt with the sense of relief.) That was a close shave!

BETTY.

(Running to phonograph and stopping it.)
I should say so!

MRS. DARLING comes from the parlor.

MRS. DARLING.

Has the salesman gone?

BETTY.

Yes.

JACK.

What is it, aunty?

MRS. DARLING.

I should like to have seen that thing he was selling.

JACK.

What, the vacuum cleaner?

MRS. DARLING.

(Coming over R. C.)

Was it a vacuum cleaner? I thought it was a coffee grinder.

BETTY.

(At L. C.)

It was both, mamma.

JACK.

(At C.)

Yes, you could grind your coffee and clean your rugs with it at the same time.

MRS. DARLING.

I don't believe I'd care for that.

BETTY.

That's just what I said, mamma, so I sent him away. (*She goes out on the porch.*)

JACK.

Well, aunty, how do you like your prospective son-in-law?

MRS. DARLING.

My dear, I can't get my breath over it yet. Think of Katherine making such a splendid match. I can't believe it even now. Poor Percy. I can see now why Katherine treated him so coldly.

JACK.

Yes, Percy is a good youth, but not exactly a fellow for a girl like Cousin Kitty to *rave* about.

MRS. DARLING.

What in the world has become of Peggy? She disappeared an hour ago. Think of it, she doesn't know yet! (*BETTY is showing signs of excitement on the porch, waving her hand and hallooing.*) Have you gone crazy, Elizabeth?

BETTY.

(*Running inside the door.*)

Mamma, who is that with Peggy—that stunning man?

JACK.

Hooray, another!

MRS. DARLING.

(*Running up to the window and looking out.*)

Stunning man? What are you talking about? Well—who in the world? And in another automobile!

BETTY.

A stranger.

JACK.

(*At BETTY's side and in a low voice to her.*)
Steady, Betty. Let the good work go on.

BETTY.

He's getting out, too.

MRS. DARLING.

Where on earth has that girl been with him? (*She is plainly worried.*)

JACK.

Easy, aunty. He looks very eligible to me.
PEGGY and HAMILTON are coming up on the porch.

JACK.

Let us handle him with care.

BETTY.

Where in the world have you been, Peggy?
(*They are coming in.*)

POSITIONS.

PEGGY. HAMILTON.

JACK.

BETTY.

BETTY.

MRS. DARLING.

(*Placing him at once.*)

Oh, Mr. Moriarity, the man who threw the—

PEGGY.

(*Quickly, as she turns on BETTY.*)

Sshh! (*Goes and confers with BETTY, R.*)

JACK.

(*Shaking hands.*)

We are delighted to meet you, Mr. Moriarity.

MRS. DARLING.

Yes, indeed. (*She is too dazed to know what she is really doing and stares in his face.*)

HAMILTON.

I am very happy to make your acquaintance. I suppose you thought I had run away with your daughter?

MRS. DARLING.

No, I really have been so busy that I—

JACK.

(Helping her out.)

Yes, we have had rather a whirl of a time today, haven't we, aunty? *(The three talk in an undertone.)*

BETTY.

(To PEGGY.)

And you've been riding all this time with him?

PEGGY.

Yes. And oh, Betty, he is wonderful! You never saw such an adorable flirt!

BETTY.

My dear, don't waste any time on flirts. Choose one that is in earnest, as Kitty did.

PEGGY.

Percy?

BETTY.

No, my dear, Percy's Uncle Richard.

PEGGY.

I don't know what you are talking about. *(BETTY imparts the news about RICHARD and KITTY in an undertone.)*

MRS. DARLING.

Won't you stay to dinner this evening, Mr. Moriarity?

HAMILTON.

Why, I should be very glad if—if I sha'n't be intruding.

JACK.

Not at all. This is Liberty Hall. Isn't it, aunty?

MRS. DARLING.

I don't know that I'd exactly call it that. But we like to be nice to nice people. Won't you sit down, Mr. Moriarity.

HAMILTON.

Thank you. (*Indicates seat for her, and "after you."*)

MRS. DARLING.

I think I must confer with my cook. Then I want you to meet my daughter's fiancé, Colonel Richard Wentworth. (*Very proudly as she pronounces his name.*)

HAMILTON.

Colonel Richard Wentworth? Why, that is the man I came down here in search of.

JACK.

You don't say.

HAMILTON.

I am an officer in the guard myself. And I've had some correspondence with Colonel Wentworth over the summer encampment and the new rifle range.

MRS. DARLING.

Oh, indeed. And what is your rank?

HAMILTON.

Major.

JACK.

Major Moriarity, you ought to charm the votes off the bushes at election time with such a name as that. (*The three talk in an undertone.*)

PEGGY.

(*Wildly excited.*)

And they are really and truly engaged? How marvelous!

BETTY.

You never saw anything so clever in your life. We can thank Cousin Edgar for it.

PEGGY.

Where are they? I want to see him. I want to congratulate them!

BETTY.

In the parlor. We drank their health in some of mother's dandelion wine.

PEGGY.

And I missed the whole thing!

BETTY.

Oh, I guess you aren't sorry. My dear, he is certainly there with the charm.

PEGGY.

He is wonderful when he gets talking. Quotes poetry and everything.

BETTY.

Peggy, you are more in love with him than ever.

PEGGY.

Oh, Betty, I'm crazy about him!

BETTY.

(Immediately crossing her and going L. and beckoning to JACK.)

Oh, Cousin Edgar, may I speak to you a moment?

JACK.

(To MRS. DARLING and HAMILTON.)

Will you excuse me? *(He goes to BETTY and the two go up and out on the porch where she is seen to tell him animatedly about PEGGY's infatuation. JACK takes the story in with great interest.)*

MRS. DARLING.

Peggy, perhaps you will tell the Colonel that Major Moriarity wishes to see him. You will excuse me, Major?

HAMILTON.

(*With a splendid bow.*)

Certainly, madam.

(*Exit MRS. DARLING, U. L.*)

PEGGY.

Do you suppose I dare interrupt the cooing doves in there?

HAMILTON.

You might give them a moment or two more. (*Indicates that she come over to the sofa where he is standing.*) I hate to interrupt love's young dream by talking about pup tents and camp kitchens.

PEGGY.

(*Crossing and sitting on sofa.*)

How do you find time for military duty with all the wonderful work you do for the State?

HAMILTON.

My dear Miss Darling, the work we do for the State is mostly in words. The supply is unlimited and costs nothing.

PEGGY.

Oh, but I am sure you must be making all sorts of wonderful laws to make everything better.

HAMILTON.

I shall have to get you to take the stump for me in my next campaign.

PEGGY.

I wish I could. I'd love to be of some use in the world.

HAMILTON.

(*Sentimentally.*)

Ah, but better still you bless the earth with your beauty. As Shakespeare says, "Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear."

PEGGY.

(Delighted but embarrassed.)

I'm afraid I don't deserve all *that*.

HAMILTON.

What do you think I meant when I threw those pansies at your feet the first time we met?

PEGGY.

I'm sure you say these things to so many girls.

HAMILTON.

Well, if a man has an eye for beauty, why shouldn't he pay tribute to it wherever he meets it?

PEGGY.

(Rises disappointed.)

I'd better go in and give your message to my new brother-in-law elect. *(Crosses to R. on her way to parlor.)*

(BETTY comes in C. D. with JACK from porch.)

BETTY.

Yes, yes, you speak to her about it. *(Goes down C. to HAMILTON, who has risen.)*

JACK.

Just a moment, Cousin Peggy. *(She stops near the parlor door and they talk in an undertone.)*

BETTY.

(To HAMILTON.)

I'm afraid you think we are a very unconventional family.

HAMILTON.

I haven't had the luck to meet all of it, but so far I should say it was just about the corkingest family in Connecticut.

BETTY.

My sister, Peggy, is so inexperienced, I suppose

she didn't think anything about going off with a stranger.

HAMILTON.

A man who represents this district in the State Assembly you can't exactly call a stranger.

BETTY.

Oh, but you are a flirt. You'll admit that?

HAMILTON. .

(*Egotistically.*)

A little flirting, now and then, is relished by the staidest men.

BETTY.

(*Very seriously.*)

Still, I wish that—oh, well, I mustn't say anything.

HAMILTON.

(*Bewildered.*)

I don't understand.

BETTY.

I only hope that no trouble comes of it. My Cousin Edgar is so hot-headed.

HAMILTON.

(*Worried.*)

I don't know what you mean.

BETTY.

(*Going up and around back of the table as she speaks.*)

Excuse me, won't you? Oh, Peggy, wait for me.
(HAMILTON is perplexed.)

JACK.

(*Aside to PEGGY.*)

Remember, if you want to be Mrs. Moriarity you will have to follow your Cousin Edgar's lead.

PEGGY.

If I were only sure that he loves me.

JACK.

A man always loves the girl he thinks some other fellow's after. (*Turning to HAMILTON.*) I am sure you will excuse the young ladies, Major Moriarity?

HAMILTON.

Certainly. (*The girls go into the parlor. He looks at JACK, who is moodily glaring at him. Feeling uncomfortable in the pause, he takes out his watch and looks at it.*) I—I—I think, after all, if you will give my excuses to Mrs. Darling, that I will go back to the Colonel's house and wait for him there.

JACK.

(*Ponderously.*)

Why? Why not wait for him here?

HAMILTON.

(*Uncomfortable under JACK's stare.*)

I think it would be very bad taste for me to butt in at a time like this. (*Starts up stage.*)

JACK.

Wait! (*HAMILTON stops. From now on JACK puts up a big bluff.*) I want a few words with you. Do you know that you are breaking up one of the happiest homes in this country?

HAMILTON.

(*Amazed.*)

I? I don't know what you are talking about.

JACK.

You came here today like a serpent in the garden.

HAMILTON.

(*Getting mad.*)

Oh, here now—

JACK.

You have been destroying the hopes of every man

in this town who aspired to win Margaret Darling as his wife.

HAMILTON.

Why—why. Is she engaged?

JACK.

(In a righteous manner.)

If she is not, it is simply because she cannot make up her mind which to choose among the young men who are in love with her.

HAMILTON.

She never said anything about—about—

JACK.

Ah, that was it. You, with your eloquence, your oratory, your command of English, have hypnotized her. You have advertised to everyone in this town that you are interested in her. You, a marked man, a conspicuous political figure. Don't tell me you didn't know what you were doing.

HAMILTON.

But my dear fellow, she wanted to go.

JACK.

Ah, there you have the weakness of the female nature. She confided her reputation to you, never dreaming that she was driving off those honest but more humble admirers. *(This last very threateningly.)*

HAMILTON.

Now, look here, Mr.—Mr.—whatever your name is.

JACK.

Edgar—Cousin Edgar. But that is of small importance. *I* am thinking of that poor girl's reputation.

HAMILTON.

But this is sheer nonsense. I had no idea of any—

thing but a pleasant drive about the town while I was waiting to see Colonel Wentworth.

JACK.

Ah, the Colonel! What will *he* say? He is marrying into this family. He knows what the gossips are in this town. If *he* gets down on you, you couldn't be elected *poundmaster* from this district.

HAMILTON.

(*Completely mystified and dazed by all this and beginning to weaken.*)

But, my dear friend, I really don't know what this is all about.

JACK.

That's it. Men like you take everything as a matter of course.

HAMILTON.

But my intention was to—

JACK.

(*Bristling up to him.*)

Do you know the place that is *paved* with intentions? Good ones at that?

HAMILTON.

(*Getting angry.*)

But I had *no* intention to—

JACK.

Ha-ha! No intentions! That's it, no intentions! You break up a girl's life, destroy her future, drive the men who love her to despair, and then you say you have "no intentions." (*He is making a good loud bluff himself.*)

HAMILTON.

But I tell you there is a mistake.

JACK.

(Taking off his coat with a belligerent air.)

There *is*. But there will be no mistake about what I'm going to do.

HAMILTON.

Look here, I'm not going into a strange house and start fighting. Keep your shirt on. I am willing to apologize to whoever I have harmed.

JACK.

Apologize?

HAMILTON.

Certainly. What else can a gentleman do?

JACK.

He can fight for his woman as did the cave man of old!

HAMILTON.

But I'm not a cave man.

JACK.

Then you refuse to give me satisfaction as the head of the family? Very well. We'll see what the Colonel has to say.

HAMILTON.

(Alarmed.)

Colonel Wentworth?

JACK.

Yes. And Lord help you if he gets after you. He'll put you in your political grave in *this* district. *(Making a bluff as if starting for the parlor, he grabs up his coat and puts it on again.)*

HAMILTON.

Wait. Wait. Can't we find a way to compromise?

JACK.

There's just one way you can compromise now.

How is that?

HAMILTON.

JACK.

Marry Margaret and make her happy.

HAMILTON.

Isn't that a pretty stiff price to pay for a flirtation? I am not a marrying man, you know, but—

JACK.

I'll let the Colonel decide. (*Makes another break for the parlor door.*)

HAMILTON.

(*Running and catching his arm R. C.*)

Here, here! Wait, wait! What I was *going* to say was—I can imagine no more charming wife in the world than Margaret. So if—

JACK.

(*Joyously breaking away and running to the parlor door.*)

Yes, yes. I understand. You needn't make a speech about it. (*Throwing the door open.*) Come out here, Peggy. Come everybody and offer your congratulations. (HAMILTON *is embarrassed but game.*)

BETTY.

(*Rushing out first.*)

What in the world are you talking about?

JACK.

(*Introducing her to HAMILTON.*)

This is Miss Elizabeth Darling, the youngest of the Darlings.

PEGGY.

(*Enters breathlessly.*)

Why, what is it, Edgar?

JACK.

The Honorable Hamilton Moriarity has something to say to the family, I believe.

BETTY.

What is it? (*She looks dazed and JACK points to PEGGY and then HAMILTON.*)

JACK.

Yes, get your mother in here.

(*BETTY exits U. L. on the run.*)

RICHARD and KITTY enter R. wonderingly.

RICHARD.

(*Seeing HAMILTON.*)

Isn't this Major Moriarity?

HAMILTON.

(*Saluting.*)

Yes, Colonel. I called to see you about the plans for the camp, and—

JACK.

I think the Colonel is taking a day off from military matters, aren't you, Colonel? (*Goes over to PEGGY R. and explains how the land lies.*)

RICHARD.

Yes, rather. Major, let me present you to my future commanding officer, Miss Katherine Darling.

KITTY.

I'm ever so glad to meet you.

HAMILTON.

Congratulations.

RICHARD.

(*Happy and glowing as he stands C. with KITTY on his R. and MORIARITY L. PEGGY is back of the table.*)

Love at first sight, it was with us. Wasn't it, Kitty?

KITTY.

(*Rather shyly.*)

Yes.

RICHARD.

That is the sign of the real thing. You look into the divorce cases and you'll find it was a long drawn out courtship. Both sick of each other before they tied up.

KITTY.

Oh, Richard, do you believe that?

RICHARD.

My dear, I intend to be married as soon as you can get your trunk packed. I won't give you time to learn all my bad habits beforehand.

HAMILTON.

(Thoughtfully.)

I believe there is something in that.

JACK.

That's the idea. Mr. Moriarity was just saying he believed in love at first sight himself.

HAMILTON.

(Choking with surprise.)

I—b-b——blub—hm!

JACK.

My Cousin Peggy, here, too, has a few ideas on the subject. Haven't you, Peg?

PEGGY.

(She also scarcely knows what to say, but stares at

HAMILTON.)

Why, I—I—I think it's—b-b-beautiful.

RICHARD.

Well, well. Is it possible that—*(With a smile at HAMILTON, meaning that he is aware.)*

HAMILTON.

(Stammering.)

Why, you see—it is—it is like this. I—I—I—

JACK.

The I's have it. (*To PEGGY.*) Step lively, PEGGY, and clinch it.

PEGGY.

(*Looking very pretty and helpless as she steps down between RICHARD and HAMILTON.*)

Really—I—I—

KITTY.

. (*Immensely surprised.*)

Why, Peggy, you don't mean that you—that you—

JACK.

Exactly. (*Nervously looking toward the door L.*) Where is your mother? (*To KITTY, with a wink.*) I think we all know the dance that Peggy has led several of the eligible young men in Stockbridge; the suitors that have been waiting for her to choose. But it has remained for that rising young statesman, that fearless orator, that stalwart young guardsman, the Honorable Major Hamilton Morarity, to distance them all in the affections of our dear and fascinating Margaret.

RICHARD.

Hooray! Wait till the regiment hears it. Wait till your women constituents get the news! Captured! The youngest and handsomest member of the Legislature! And by my own pretty little sister-in-law elect. We'll have a double wedding.

KITTY.

. (*Runs and kisses PEGGY.*)

Oh, Peggy. How *did* you keep it such a secret?

PEGGY.

I never expected to see him again. And then—

HAMILTON.

(Now carried away completely and losing his instinctive fear of marriage, he draws PEGGY to him.)

Make me happy and say yes.

PEGGY.

(Looking up at him.)

Yes! *(He kisses her.)*

At this moment MRS. DARLING and BETTY come in U. L. The good lady is in a terribly fussed state, not knowing whether to be pleased or angry.

JACK.

Bless you, my children! Ah, here is aunty. What if she forbids the banns? Have you fixed it for them, Betty?

BETTY.

Yes, Peggy told me all about falling in love at first sight, and-

JACK.

(Bringing BETTY down on his R. and MRS. DARLING on his L. and all at center.)

Of course. And forgetting the fellows that were trying to get her to change her name and be Mrs. Them. *(All the family are amazed at these whoppers, but letting him carry them off.)* Why, I knew they had lost out when I saw Peggy advertising to-day that she was going to be Mrs. Moriarity by riding all over the place in Hamilton's car. *(Talking glibly and crossing and, as he comes to the end of the above, seizing HAMILTON's hand.)* Congratulations, you've won a prize. Ham, old man, I wish you both joy. *(To PEGGY.)* Peggy, take your Cousin Edgar's blessing. *(Kisses her.)*

BETTY.

And mine, too. *(She kisses PEGGY and with a*

wicked look up at MORIARITY.) What a whirl you must be!

MRS. DARLING.

Margaret, dear! (*She is weeping a tiny bit as she kisses PEGGY.*) Mr. — er — a — Major — my son! (*Kisses him; he embraces her.*) I hope you will be very happy. (*KITTY and RICHARD have gone up stage. MRS. DARLING is still a bit confused.*) Come in to the parlor, my dears. We must have a toast to the happiness of Peggy and—and—oh, yes, Mr. Moriarity. (*She exits into the parlor.*)

RICHARD.

(*Following with his arm around KITTY.*)

Come on in, Moriarity. Come, Peggy, this is a festival day. Come, we'll make it a foursome. (*He and KITTY go into the parlor. HAMILTON is following with his arm around PEGGY.*)

HAMILTON.

(*Stopping just outside the door.*)

I don't know how this has all happened.

PEGGY.

Neither do I.

HAMILTON.

But I'm very happy. How about you?

PEGGY.

I feel as if I were in a beautiful dream.

HAMILTON.

All right, then. Don't let anybody wake us up. (*He kisses her and they exit into parlor.*)

JACK.

(*Who has been watching them, with BETTY, holds up his hand, extending his first and second fingers.*)

T w o!

BETTY.

You are a wizard.

JACK.

And our bet?

BETTY.

It isn't won yet.

JACK.

Two-thirds won. How about paying?

BETTY.

(Dancing away L.)

Pay in full on delivery.

JACK.

All right; never say die.

BETTY.

(Stopping suddenly over by the door.)

Hush! *(Noise of DOLLY's and PERCY's voices in the dining room.)* My goodness, what's the matter with Percy?

JACK.

Are they coming in here? *(Goes over to closet door L.)*

BETTY.

Yes.

JACK.

Come here and let us decide what to do next. *(Opens the door and steps inside. She follows. They do not close the door. He stands with his hand on the knob, the door screening them.)*

DOLLY.

(Outside L.)

Come in here. They've all gone now.

DOLLY and PERCY enter U. L., she supporting him. PERCY is feeling the effects of the home-made beverage.

PERCY.

It'sh sho funny. I never felt like thish before.

DOLLY.

Oh, Percy, I do hope you are not going to die!

PERCY.

Sho do I. (*DOLLY is leading him to the sofa, which is just above and beyond the closet door.*)

JACK.

(*Aside to BETTY.*)

Percy is spifflicated.

DOLLY.

Sit down here, Percy, and rest. (*Putting him down on the sofa and sitting below him.*)

PERCY.

Yesh—thatsh it. I need a resht. (*Shaking his head sadly.*) What I've been through thish evening ish too much.

DOLLY.

Why, it isn't evening yet.

PERCY.

Ishn't it? I thought it wash. "I've shuffered sho much I can't remember.

DOLLY.

Don't think about it any more.

PERCY.

(*Taking her hand and looking at her pathetically.*)

You feel shorry for me—don't you, Dolly?

DOLLY.

Yes, but I don't think it's your suffering that's made you ill.

PERCY.

Oh, yesh it ish. My shufferings are shimplly terrible.

DOLLY.

I'm afraid it's mamma's dandelion wine.

PERCY.

(Shaking his head solemnly.)

It wasn't the wine made me shuffer. It was that heartless shister of yours.

DOLLY.

No, no. I mean it was the wine that made you ill.

PERCY.

Did I drink some wine?

DOLLY.

Why, yes. Don't you remember?

PERCY.

Ishn't it fiersh? I can't remember anyshing. All I know ish that nobody lovsh me. *(Begins to weep.)*

DOLLY.

Oh, don't say that, Percy. I—I like you.

PERCY.

Thash jusht it! Thash jusht it! Everybody liksh me. Nobody lovsh me. Speshly girls.

DOLLY.

(Half shyly.)

You don't want anybody to love you but Kitty.

PERCY.

(Recklessly.)

I don't care who lovsh me; just sho shomebody lovsh me. *(Weeping.)* It'sh a terrible thing when nobody lovsh you. Terrible!

(JACK has been whispering to BETTY, and he now steps out of the closet, followed by her.)

JACK.

Here, here! What sort of a speech is that?

DOLLY.

(*With a little scream of fright.*)

Oh, Edgar! (*She jumps up and runs over to the other side of the room. JACK stands in front of PERCY with folded arms.*)

BETTY.

What in the world ails him?

DOLLY.

Why, he took only two glasses of mother's dandelion wine. Then he began to get so wobbly—and like this.

JACK.

(*Sternly.*)

What I want to know is, are you trifling with this girl?

DOLLY.

(*Frightened and clinging to BETTY.*)

What is he talking about?

BETTY.

Be quiet, Dolly!

PERCY.

(*Staring up at JACK.*)

Trifling? Whash you mean, trifling?

JACK.

I mean talking about love to Dolly.

PERCY.

Who elsh will I talk to? Dolly's sho shympathetic.

JACK.

Exactly. And you are trifling with her sympathies, you young brute.

PERCY.

Brute? Are you calling me a brute?

JACK.

I certainly am. You were taking advantage of

being alone here to speak of love to my Cousin Dolly. Weren't you?

PERCY.

Yesh.

DOLLY.

Oh, Edgar, how can you?

BETTY.

You know you are crazy about him.

DOLLY.

Oh, hush!

JACK.

Dolly, could you make up your mind to marry this besotted youth if he were to ask you?

DOLLY.

Oh, Edgar, I'd adore to.

PERCY.

(*To himself.*)

Brute—who's a brute?

JACK.

Now, sir, you have won the affections of my cousin. What are you going to do about it?

PERCY.

Affectionsh? Do you mean that shomebody lovsh me?

JACK.

I certainly do.

PERCY.

(*Struggling to get on his feet.*)

Lead me to her.

JACK.

Dolly, come here.

BETTY.

(*Steering DOLLY over to him.*)

Now, Dolly, do your part.

DOLLY.

If he were only more like himself.

(*JACK is assisting PERCY to his feet.*)

BETTY.

He'd never have the nerve to propose then.

JACK.

Dolly, would you burden yourself with such a specimen as this?

DOLLY.

Oh, Edgar, I'd adore to.

PERCY.

(*Wobbly but sincere.*)

Dolly, you're the most affectionate girl I ever knew. I'm so crazy about you that I didn't dare shay so.

JACK.

There, Dolly. (*Passing her L. C. to PEGGY.*)

DOLLY.

Oh, Percy!

PERCY.

Lesh run away and get married.

DOLLY.

But you're not quite—yourself.

PERCY.

I know it. If nobody lovsh me I want to drink myshelf to death. Could you love me when I'm sober, Dolly darling?

DOLLY.

Oh, Percy! You are too heavenly. (*She guides him to the sofa.*)

PERCY.

And will you be Mrs. Pershy Wentworth?

DOLLY.

(*Sitting with him.*)

But I thought you were in love with Kitty.

PERCY.

I wash, until I found out you were sho shympathetic. *Then* I found out it wash you, Dolly, I loved all the time.

DOLLY.

Oh, Percy! (*They embrace.*)

JACK.

(*Holding up his hand with three fingers extended.*)

Th r e e!

BETTY.

I don't believe it!

JACK.

(*Running across to the parlor door.*)

Just you wait. (*Calls into parlor.*) Come in here, everybody. The latest candidates for congratulations are in here. Moriarity, you and Peggy are back numbers already. (*BETTY goes up to window L.*)

MRS. DARLING, HAMILTON, PEGGY, RICHARD and KITTY come in from the parlor. JACK takes MRS. DARLING by the arm and leads the procession down the stage in front of PERCY and DOLLY on the sofa.)

JACK.

Come on, aunty, you've got another prospective son-in-law.

MRS. DARLING.

What in the world do you mean?

DOLLY.

(*Jumping up and going to her mother.*)

Oh, mamma, he—he—

(KITTY has taken in the situation and has been whispering to RICHARD.)

RICHARD.

Percy, what the devil are you up to?

PERCY.

I'm through wish college. I'm going to be happy.

MRS. DARLING.

Do you mean that you have proposed to Dolly?

PERCY.

I can't remember. But I want a blessing on our wedding.

MRS. DARLING.

I don't know whether I'm in my right senses or not.

PEGGY and KITTY.

How wonderful!

The idea!

HAMILTON.

It seems to be in the air.

RICHARD.

Perhaps marriage would make a man of him.

JACK.

You bet it would! (*To Mrs. DARLING.*) Give your consent, aunty.

MRS. DARLING.

Why—why—

(*All but JACK and BETTY crowd around in front of the sofa to congratulate PERCY and DOLLY.*)

RICHARD.

What's the matter with you, Percy?

PERCY.

Excuse me, I'm feeling very ill.

DOLLY.

(*KITTY and PEGGY kiss her.*)

Oh, girls, isn't it magical the way things have happened today?

RICHARD.

Well, I hope you will be as happy as I am, boy.

HAMILTON.

Congratulations. (*PERCY cannot be seen by the audience for the others in front of him.*)

JACK.

(*Who has gone up and got BETTY and is now bringing her down.*)

Come, now; own up. I've won.

BETTY.

Then I suppose I've lost.

JACK.

Pay up.

BETTY.

Oh, not now.

JACK.

When?

BETTY.

Oh, when there isn't a whole crowd present.

JACK.

Come out on the porch. (*Taking her hand.*)

He does not see EDGAR, who with his luggage is again on the porch coming to the door.

JACK.

Come on. (*They almost bump into EDGAR.*)

JACK and BETTY.

(*Together.*)

Look who's here! (*All the others turn around and see the stranger and exclaim.*)

JACK.

What are you doing back here again?

EDGAR.

(*Speaking angrily at the top of his voice.*)

I want to see my aunt.

JACK.

(*Trying to hustle him out.*)

Don't you see the convention's in session?

BETTY.

Oh, *do* go away!

MRS. DARLING.

Is that the peddler?

EDGAR.

(*Breaking away from JACK and coming down C.*)

Aunt Mary, don't you know me?

ALL.

Aunt Mary?

JACK.

(*To BETTY.*)

It's all off.

EDGAR.

Aunt Mary Darling, I'm your nephew, Edgar Darling. And this person has been trying to keep me from seeing you all afternoon.

ALL.

What?

MRS. DARLING.

I think I'm going crazy.

KITTY.

(*To JACK.*)

Aren't *you* Edgar Darling?

PEGGY.

Aren't you?

DOLLY.

Aren't you?

JACK.

I have been for three short hours, but I resign in favor of this gentleman who seems to have a prior right to the title.

MRS. DARLING.

Good heavens! What it what and who is who?
(*They all stand amazed at this new revelation.*)

EDGAR.

This person and that young lady have been trying to tell me that you didn't live here.

BETTY.

Now, Edgar, can't you take a joke?

JACK.

I'm afraid we can't depend upon Edgar's sense of humor.

BETTY.

(*Crossing to her mother.*)

Now, mamma, don't be angry. It was a bet.

ALL.

A bet?

MRS. DARLING.

And what was this precious bet?

BETTY.

Why, he bet that the girls—(*Realizing the danger of telling.*) Oh, my goodness, it was just a bet, and I lost.

MRS. DARLING.

And how much shall I have to pay for your losing your bet?

JACK.

(*At L. C.*)

Oh, my dear madam, I couldn't permit you to pay.

MRS. DARLING.

Why not?

BETTY.

It was three kisses, mamma, one for each of the girls.

THE GIRLS.

From us?

BETTY.

No, I was the one to pay.

RICHARD.

And who is this young man?

JACK.

(Pulling card from case.)

Here is my card, Colonel Wentworth. I am Jack Van Loon of the Seventh New York.

HAMILTON and RICHARD.

Jack Van Loon?

Captain Jack Van Loon?

JACK.

Yes, I'm down here today picking out a site for a new factory. I'll be camping here, too, with you fellows.

RICHARD.

Why, of course.

HAMILTON.

Yes, but what's all this stuff you've been putting over?

RICHARD.

(Seriously.)

Yes, what's the idea?

JACK.

Well, I'm after one of these Darlings, and I wanted to get you fellows out of the way.

HAMILTON.

Which one?

RICHARD.

You can't have Kitty, my boy.

HAMILTON.

Nor Peggy.

PERCY.

Nor Dolly.

JACK.

(With a laugh.)

I'll take what's left of the Darlings. (PEGGY and KITTY have surrounded BETTY, R. C. To EDGAR,

who is talking to MRS. DARLING earnestly.) Edgar, forgive me. I have immortalized you, but you didn't know it.

BETTY.

Jack Van Loon is the one who paid my fine at the police station, brought me home in his car, and—

(KITTY crosses to RICHARD.)

JACK.

(*Going R. C. to BETTY.*)

And is going to collect three kisses from you now, providing you'll—(*He stops.*)

BETTY.

What? (*He whispers in her ear and she nods.*)

JACK.

You will? Then here goes. One! (*He kisses one cheek.*) Two! (*Kisses the other cheek.*) Three! (*Kisses her forehead.*) And four for the future Mrs. Jack Van Loon. (*Kisses her on the lips. BETTY is enraptured.*)

HANNAH enters U. L.

HANNAH.

My land sakes, there's another ottymobile in front of the house. What'll the neighbors think?

JACK.

Tell them there was a bridegroom in every one of them.

HANNAH.

(*Falls back and looks at all the lovers.*)

Good Lord!

PEGGY.

(*At the phonograph.*)

Oh, let's celebrate!

MRS. DARLING.

Make yourself at home, Edgar. These are all your cousins.

(She sits in a chair L. of table. EDGAR, near her, puts down his grips. HANNAH is up L. PERCY is now fast asleep on the sofa with his head on DOLLY's shoulder. RICHARD and KITTY L. C. HAMILTON and PEGGY R. JACK and BETTY C.)

BETTY.

(To JACK.)

What will you bet that we quarrel?

JACK.

No, this is my last bet.

BETTY.

And mine, too. I swear off.

HANNAH.

Have they all gone crazy? What do you call this, anyway?

MRS. DARLING.

This is what I call the end of a perfect day!

(She makes EDGAR at home L. C. PERCY and DOLLY are still on the sofa. HANNAH is up L. C. The three other happy young couples dance in a circle around the stage to the music of the phonograph.)

CURTAIN.

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FANNY CANNON

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Sarah Stone.....Still Another
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Florence Bellows..... His Charming Daughter
Mrs. MacEckron..... His Neighbor
Dolly MacEckron..... Her Daughter
Maggie Brady..... The Maid
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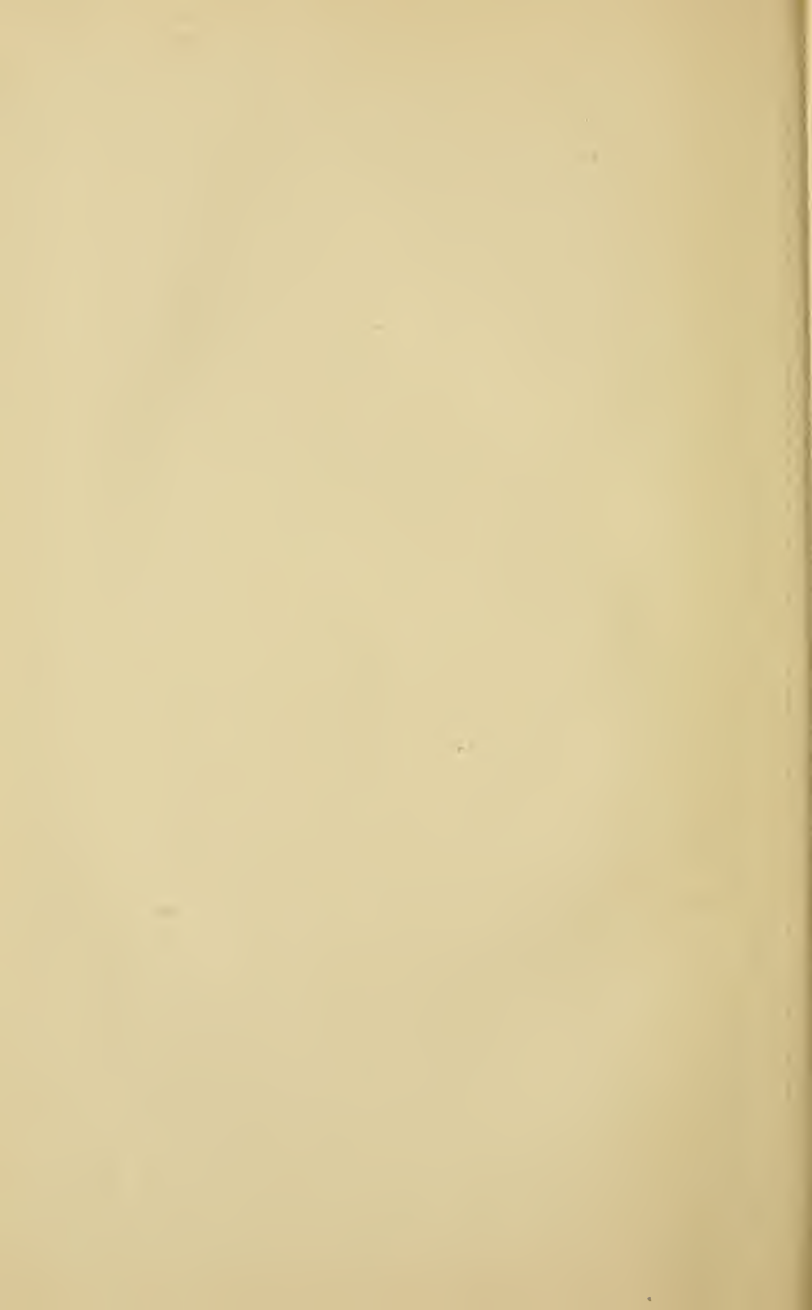
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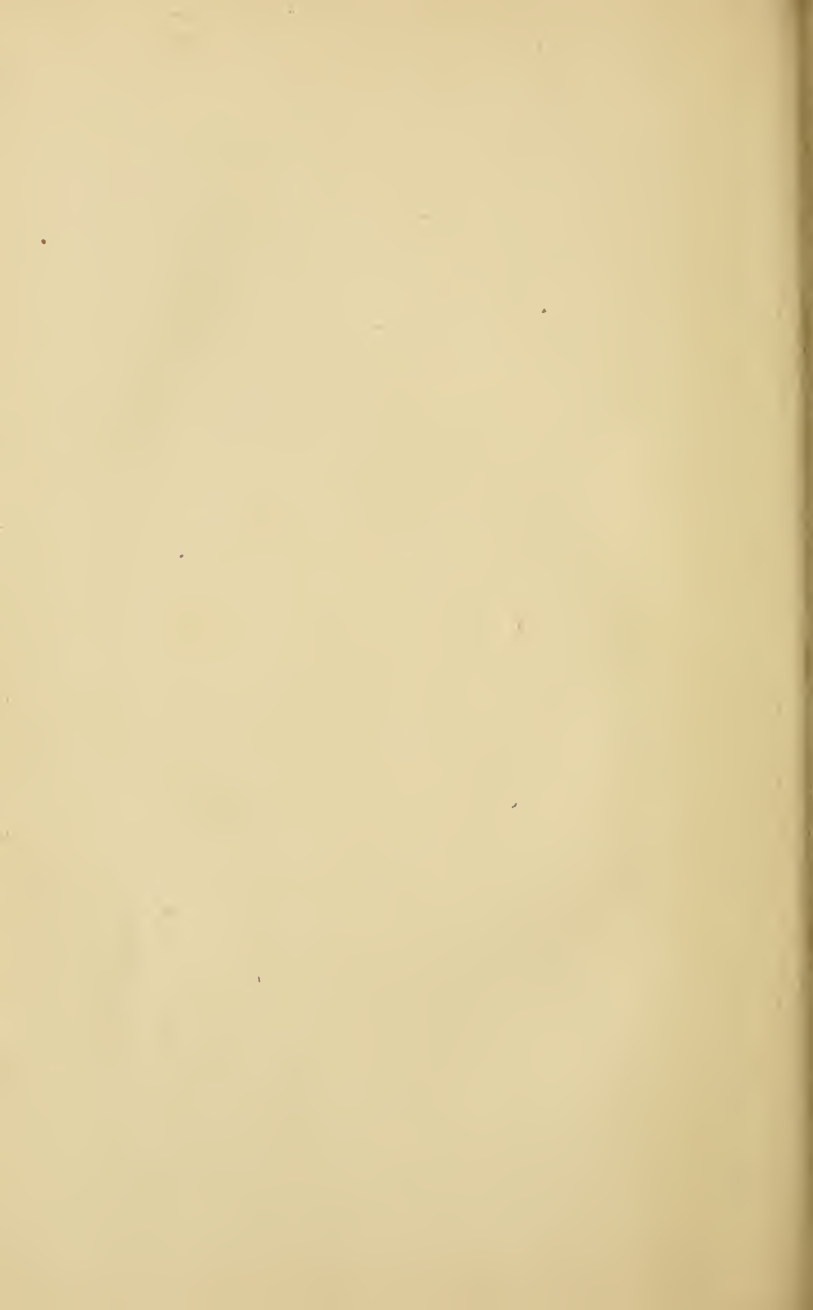
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